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**BRAND STRATEGY: FIVE BRANDING  
DECISIONS. A RESEARCH ON  
MANCHESTER UNITED FC**

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## ABSTRACT

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Brand is a name, a symbol, or a term of one product. A brander, or a marketer, uses a brand and its associations to deliver products and services to brand users. During the brand management procedure, branders aim to build a relationship between the brand performers and brand audiences. Today, operating a brand is more like handling marketing activities; organizations or individuals are more willing to create value and create benefits from their products and services by implementing brand strategies.

Brand strategies can be conducted in many ways, for example by enhancing one's brand equity, by strengthening brand identity, or by increasing brand value. In this study, the reader will know brand strategies in a set of branding decisions way. These branding decisions are branding decision, brand-sponsor decision, brand-name decision, brand-strategy decision, and brand-repositioning decision.

The case company of this study is a football club called Manchester United. The study presented related theories and analyzed current factors about Manchester United. In the empirical study, quantitative research was launched; its objective aimed to improve Manchester United's brand strategies based on the perceptions of its fans.

At the end of the study, research results were published; according to the responses of the fans, the conclusion of Manchester United's brand strategy improvements was written down. Moreover, managerial implications were unfolded, followed by recommendations for further study.

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Keywords	Brand; Brand Strategy; Branding Decisions; Manchester United.
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Kansainvälisen Liiketoiminnan

## TIIVISTELMÄ

Tekijä	Xinyan Zhang
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Brändi on nimi, symboli tai termi yhdelle tuotteelle. Brander-tai markkinoija, käyttää tuotemerkkiä ja yritykset tarjoavat tuotteita ja palveluita brändin käyttäjille. Yhdessä vuodessa pyritään rakentamaan toimiva brändi. Nykyään toimiva brändi on enemmän kuin pelkkä käsitelty markkinointi. Organisaatiot ja yksilöt ovat valmiita luomaan arvoa ja hyötymään tuotteistaan ja palveluista toteuttamallaan tuotemerkin strategioita.

Brändi-strategioita voidaan toteuttaa monella tavalla, esimerkiksi tehostamalla omaa brändipääoma, vahvistamalla brändin identiteettiä tai lisäämällä brändin arvoa. Tässä tutkimuksessa luki-ja haluaa tietää tuotemerkin strategian tuotemerkin omistajan haluamalla tavalla. Nämä branding-päätökset ovat brandin kehittävän oma päätös, brändi-sponsori päätös, tuotenimipäätös, brändi- strategian päätökseen, ja brändin uudelleensijoitus päätökseen.

Kohdeyrityksenä tutkimuksessa on jalkapalloseura nimeltä Manchester United. Tutkimuksessa esitellään siihen liittyviä teorioita sekä analysoidaan nykyiset tekijät Manchester Unitedissa. Kun empiirinen tutkimus, kvantitatiivinen tutkimus aloitettiin, sen todellisena tavoitteena oli parantaa Manchester Unitedin brändiä, jotka perustuu käsitykseen sen faneista.

Lopussa tutkimustulokset julkaistaan fanien vastausten perusteella, miten Manchester Unitedin brändi on parantunut. Lisäksi johdon vaikutuksia tarkkaillaan ja sitä seuraako siitä jatkotutkimuksia.

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Avainsanat	Brändi; Brändi Strategioita; Branding päätökset; Manchester United.
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Brand has never been more significant than it is today (Temporal 2010, ix). Over the past twenty years, branding implementations have changed dramatically. Suggest turning our sights back to 1980s and 1990s, we would notice that not only companies but also organizations were enhancing their understanding of the crucial characteristics and target benefits that represented by brands. However, considering an increasing competition in business world that “clients are more empowered today” (Kapferer 2008, 1), organizations have to refine their brands and optimize their brand strategies correspondently. This becomes a predominant topic nowadays.

## 1.1 Background of the Study

The whole process of this study is introduced here. The following discussions are mainly focus on three aspects: The definition and property of brand, which are illustrated from six levels of means brand; Brand and its main variables, which consists of three terminologies concerning brand; Brand strategies and branding decisions, which unfolds five branding decisions. Furthermore, a motivation why the author applies this study in football branding is discussed. Based on those theoretical presentations, an empirical implementation that integrates a case study is practiced afterwards.

### 1.1.1 Different Roles Played in Brand Game

As well known, when businessmen talks about Marketing, they catch up the ideas of 4Ps, sometimes 7Ps. Those Ps play a marketing game forever. If we regards brand, or branding as a game too, the main participants are six different roles – we call those “The six levels of meaning of brand”. The levels of meaning are brand attributes, brand benefits, brand value, brand culture, brand personality, and brand user. As long as any study and research target brand, those roles have been never overlooked. Thus in this study, the six levels of meaning of brand is discussed in the beginning of Chapter 2.

### 1.1.2 Critical Terminologies Concerned in A Brand

The terminologies of brand that are most frequently mentioned in previous studies are “brand equity”, “brand identity” and “brand value”. This study will unfold these three terms in Chapter 2. Why does this thesis mention these terms? Kapferer (2008, 1) figured out that today almost all business managers have concentrated their work on customer relationship marketing, customer equity, customer database management, e-relationship and proximity marketing. All these new aspects to which managers have shifted are criticizing old brand operations, while emphasizing efficient techniques of brand to serve desirable customers. Pressuring profitable customer becomes critical if an enterprise intended to enhance its brand equity, to achieve its brand identity, and to increase its brand value.

Brand equity is about the knowledge that brand reflects to customers, whose buying behavior and feedback are also affected by marketing activities (See Temporal 2010, 4). (More discussions in Chapter 2.3) Brand identity concerns how you wish your customers to regard your brand, how you bridge a gap between the brand image and brand identity (See Upshaw (1995, 14). (More discussions in Chapter 2.4) Brand value is the financial worth of the brand; it acts as an ability of brands to deliver profits (See Kapferer 2008, 14). (More discussions in Chapter 2.5) To a certain extent, we can conclude that implementing excellent brand strategies can achieve a leap among brand equity, identity, and value.

Loken, Ahluwalia, and Houston (2010, xxi) believed that brand extensions were used to leverage their brands; brand alliance were experimented to create new advantaged categories of products; brand loyalty was practiced to measure brand's equity. Based on the understanding of the three elements of brand, all these actions are treated as an ideal brand strategy combination to assistant companies in order to enrich intangible assets, to prettify organization's image, further, and to increase value of their own brand. From Chapter 2.4 to 2.6, there is a deep discussion about these three terms concerning brand.

### **1.1.3 Brand Strategy Disserted in New Horizon**

There has been a great number of publications about brand strategy. Those papers mainly illustrate or analysis “brand strategy” in the ways such as building long-term brand equity, increasing brand value, and enhancing brand identity; or even in the most common way: using marketing mix elements. However, the innovative significance of this paper is analyzing brand strategy in a new way: how are brand strategies of company implemented in “branding decisions” ways.

Brand marketing is mostly considered as a system, but it is still important to keep in mind that every brand strategy is developed within a context that performs as branding decisions. (Franzen & Moriarty 2009, 24) In the beginning of Chapter 3, a detailed statement about brand strategy in a series of branding decisions is presented. Meanwhile, the whole chapter examines how branding decisions influence a company’s brand. Both theoretical and empirical analysis are carried out, the case is Manchester United FC.

### **1.1.4 Motivations Towards Football Branding**

Sport is a global industry, whose turn-over amounts to three percent of the world’s total economic activity. In the view of business, football is a growing sport of business among different forms of sports. There are more members in FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) than in UN. Today football is taking a big portion in the development of world sports. In 2009, German Bundesliga (German first-class football league) overtook the English Premier League to be ranked as the world’s most profitable football league with an operating profit up to €172 million. (See Dolles and Söderman 2011, 1)

From business perspective, in today’s world football acts more as one access to commercial. Broadcast and media margins of business are created from on-field matches; Players’ transfer statuses among clubs are operated in financial ways; Differentiated new commodities are launched by using players’ individual idol effect.

Football activity has turned into business during recent two decades, at the same time brand is more frequently mentioned by those business participants. Whether a football club itself (e.g FC Barcelona and Real Madrid), or an authority relates to a club (eg. Qatar Investment Authority of Paris Saint-Germain), or a consortium behind a club (eg. Abu Dhabi United Group of Manchester City FC), all their interest is how to treat a team as a brand to gain profits. Brand is a symbol and an image reflecting an enterprise; a successful brand creates profit for an enterprise. Therefore, establishing and marketing a brand becomes significant.

So far there are not sufficient research studies emphasising on football-branding. As an undergraduate student majoring in International Business, I am interested in how a football industry can be so successful beside of its on-field performances, but in terms of brand effects. Therefore, to launch a research that relevant to football-branding is the starting point of this thesis; to fulfil the research gap is the attention of this thesis. Both from outside business context and inside personal interest, a thesis about football branding is built.

### **1.1.5 Research Objectives and Problems Emerged at Last**

Manchester United (short for MANU, MU or United) is an English professional football club. It is based in Old Trafford, Great Manchester, England, and it is playing the England Premier League. “Newton Heath LYR Football Club” is the predecessor that was founded in 1878; the club changed its name to Manchester United in 1902. As the most successful football team in England and even Europe, it has won in excess of 50 trophies, including 19 league titles, 11 FA Cups, 3 European Cups. The current manager is Sir Alex Ferguson. Under his leadership, Manchester United becomes one of the most worldwide supported football teams. (MUFC 2012)

According to a Brand Finance report, *Marketing Week* in 2011 showed that Manchester United, whose brand value has risen from 197 million pounds to 412 million pounds since 2005, surpassed Coca-Cola to become the 6<sup>th</sup> biggest brand in the World. Before Manchester United, according to the *Daily Mirror*, the Big Five are Google, Apple, BBC, Dyson, and Facebook. (Moss 2011) In the last year

Manchester United announced a record annual operating profit of £110.9 million. A strategy behind this remarkable figure is signing contracts with global partners such as Aon, Nike, Audi, Turkish Airlines, and DHL. Those sponsors paid a collective £110 million annually to Man U. (Miller 2011).

Clifton & Ahmad (2009, 73) have shown there is no doubt that a strong brand owns a superior brand positioning that can be continually executed for its target group. There is one fact that can match this commend: With successful brand strategies implementations. Manchester United now owns a £1.2 billion franchise with an estimated global fan base of 333 million people all over the world, of whom 139 million are core fans and 92 million are in Asia so far. (Masood 2011)

A brand from football industry took steps into the world's biggest brand top 10. What a historical breakthrough for football! However, why did Manchester United achieve it by exceeding Real Madrid, Barcelona, or Arsenal? What brand strategies did Manchester United put into force so that its brand became so successful? Based on the current situation of MU brand, what issues can improve its brand strategies? Therefore, the objective of the study will return next to those questions above.

In the following chapters of the thesis, a set of brand strategy is considered as the factors that lead a brand to become successful. Such theoretical analysis and empirical researches in the paper are on basis of brand strategy. In addition, recommendations to improve those strategies will be presented based on empirical findings.

## **1.2 Objective and Problems of the Study**

The preceding discussion about the topic of the study leads to the aims of the present study. The research objective of the study is to empirically investigate the best ways “to improve the brand strategy of Manchester United based on fans’ perceptions”.

In order to achieve this main goal, below listed research problems need to be solved based on the fans’ answers:

1. In which ways the six levels of meaning affect the brand of Manchester United?
2. What are the ways the brand equity, brand identity, and brand value affect brand strategies of Manchester United?
3. How did Manchester United perform its brand strategies so far concerning the five branding-decisions?
4. At last, what strategies in branding decisions does Manchester United lack of? How to improve its strategies?

The thesis will unfold both theoretically and empirically, from theories illustrations to case presentations.

To understand the objective that is shown above better, a quantitative research method is introduced and a research questionnaire is presented. In Chapter 4, the research methodology is discussed.

### **1.3 Structure of the Study**

The thesis is constructed as follows.

Chapter 1: Instructions. The background of the study is mainly discussed. The study's objective adhering research problems are shown. The structure of the study is presented.

Chapter 2: This chapter mainly presents the definitions, properties, and features of brand. It introduces three important concepts relevant to brand theoretically, figures out the difference between brand and branding, and introduces brand strategy that in branding decisions ways.

Chapter 3: This chapter focuses on a set of brand strategy – five main branding decisions is presenting. Case of Manchester United is integrated.

Chapter 4: This chapter discusses the methodology used in the study. It begins with a presentation of research methods, sample and data collection, and data analysis approach, followed by a discussion about research validity and reliability.

Chapter 5: The results of the empirical research are described in this chapter.

Chapter 6: A summary and conclusion are presented according to a research framework and empirical findings in this chapter. In addition, a managerial implication for future research is drawn at the end of the whole study.



## **2 BRAND AND ITS VARIABLES**

In order to study brand strategy and further strategy implementations, we must know the nature of brand at first; Brand equity, brand identity and brand value acts as three core concept of brand and brand marketing, this should be noticed before whatever brand-related activities we intend to discuss. In this chapter the study presents the definition of brand, followed by a discussion of brands strategy decisions. Afterwards, the main brand strategies are introduced. The brand strategy implementations are described and analyzed on the basis of theories and case study.

### **2.1 What Is Brand?**

At the initial stage of talking about brand strategies, it should be defined what brand is in an academic perspective. Perhaps there are disagreements of the definition of a brand among experts and organizations. However, based on the information collected, a brand can be defined as a name or term, a sign or symbol, a design, or a mix of all the previous; it intends to recognize goods or services of a seller while distinguishing them from those of others. (American Marketing Association 2011)

Keller (1998, 2-3) highlighted the key to creating a brand as selecting a name, logo, symbol, package design, or other attributes that can define a product and differ from others. These attributes are called brand elements, which come in various ways. Brand names can come from people, places, or other objectives and things. Being similar with brand names, other brand elements such as brand logos and symbols probably are also based on people, places, images, or other forms. To sum up, marketers have many options to create a brand, from the nature of the brand elements to the identity of product. In addition, brand elements can be chosen in a manner to build such brand equity as possible. (More explanations will be discussed in Chapter 2.3 – brand equity.)

Indeed, AMA defined brand or Keller highlighted the key under a general context; but some experts defined brand in specific ways. Kotler (1999, 404) regarded

brand as a promise of the seller, the promise spreads a set of benefits, characteristics, services to the buyer. Kapferer (2008, 9-10) believed in a customer-based definition of brand. He thought brand has value to create awareness, belief, and bond into receivers' minds and hearts. Van Gelder (2003, 1) proposed brand strategically: brand is innovated, stimulated and operated by staffs working in companies exploring experiences for customers to induce behavior beneficial back to companies.

In this paper, a brand is an intangible asset held by the provider or the seller; it can dump an organization's business concepts into customers' brain. To be precise, brand is a substance we can look at and touch; it is an image we can think about; more importantly, it is a relationship that the seller and the buyer establish.

The interaction between companies and consumers forms marketing; while brand creates certain market-effects. Williams (2011) proposed that brand implementation is one of the most curtail factors of any business. Mature brand strategies bring performers a major advantage in increasingly competitive markets.

## **2.2 Six Levels of Meaning of A Brand**

As discussed above, a brand can be regarded as a complicated symbol, which mainly delivers six levels of meanings (Kotler 1999, 404). An example of McDonald is given by the writer of this thesis.

- 1. Attributes:** A brand brings certain attributes to mind. McDonald suggests cheap, fast, leisure, multi-orientation catering.
- 2. Benefits:** The attributes transfer functional and emotional benefits. "Cheap" and "fast" would express functional benefits like "I don't have much money to spend on lunch!" "I cannot choose a normal restaurant for lunch because I have an appointment after half an hour." The attribute "leisure" and "multi-orientation" would express emotional benefits that "Family weekend activity relates to children's games in McDonald. Family-base competitions own prize of McDonald."

3. **Value:** The brand also represents something about the producer's value. McDonald sends toys and gifts to children and attracts them to come back.
4. **Culture:** The brand probably reveals a certain culture. McDonald is a typical American-culture-based food chain: Fun, entertainment, popularity and equity.
5. **Personality:** The brand can organize certain personality. McDonald's slogan is "I'm Loving It."
6. **User:** The brand proposes the kind of a consumer who buys or uses the product. McDonald's audiences are classified by no status, no region, and no background. Anyone from anywhere can be a customer of McDonald.

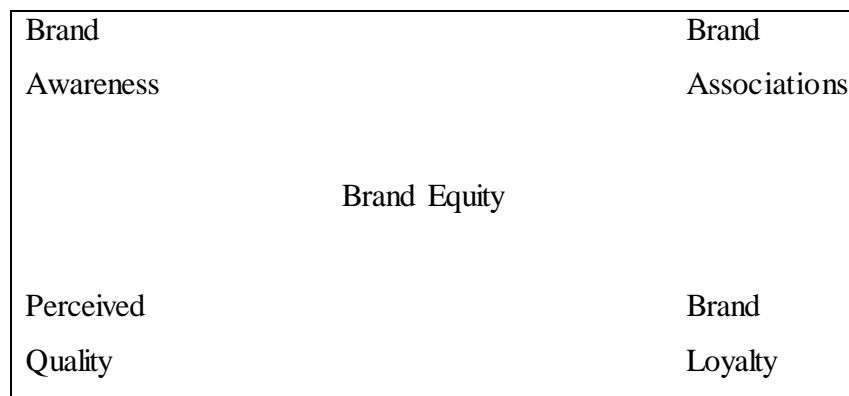
The six levels of meaning sketch a contour of a brand and its property. It is also a basic step for anyone who is interested in brand management. Actually, beside the brand itself, three key variables concerning a brand are popularly analyzed in brand management. Brand equity, brand identity, and brand value compass brand and brand management all the time. These terminologies are presented one by one in the following, attached with a practical case of Manchester United.

### 2.3 Brand Equity

Weng (2006, 147) proposed that brand equity is a set of brand assets and liabilities attached to a brand, whose name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provide to company or customers. Referring to the author, brand equity can impact information proceeding and create greater decision making for company, thereby meet customers' satisfaction.

From seller's perspective more precisely, Weng (2006, 148) believed that brand equity assists sellers promote marketing efficiency and effectiveness, establish brand loyalty, improve profit margins, receive leverage over retailers, and fulfill diversities over the competition.

Aaker and McLoughlin (2007, 174) presented the sources of brand equity: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty.



*Figure 1. Sources of brand equity (Aaker and McLoughlin 2007, 174)*

**Brand Awareness** is the strength of a brand's presence in the memory of a consumer; it can bring a reason to buy also a foundation for customer relationship. Brand with high awareness can be associated and thus purchased more frequently. Sponsorship acts as an important tool to build brand awareness. More discussion of sponsorship in further chapter: brand-sponsor decision.

**Perceived Quality** concentrates on how quality perceptions affect customer purchasing behavior; it always provides a reason to buy for many people. On the other hand, the pursuit of quality from customers can result communities to form quality advancement. In furnishing market, IKEA stands for the world's largest furniture retailer, designs and sells ready-to-assemble furniture and home accessories. Its advantage is about cost control and product development. More discussion perceived quality in further chapter: brand-strategy decision.

**Brand Associations** are made with a brand by consumer. The associations help consumers to connect with the brand so that consumers can recall the brand. Associations can be any aspects relate to brand, such as brand design, brand symbols, brand term. The associations are created by using marketing mix elements: product, price, place, and promotion.

**Brand Loyalty** is the key consideration when placing value on brand; it measures whether a customer intent to rebuy the brand. A center issue of brand loyalty is if or not the consumers promote the brand to others by word-of-mouth. In addition, good brand loyalty impacts brand to gain support from retailers; extensions of

good brands are more attractive to retailers. More discussion of brand extension in further chapter: brand-strategy decision.

Brand elements, which were discussed earlier, can be chosen to reinforce brand awareness and facilitate the form of intensive, favorable, and unique brand associations. Therefore, brand elements evaluate what consumers think about the product if they were only familiar with its brand name, logo or slogan. (Keller 1998, 130)

Keller (1998, 131-134) pointed five choice criteria in choosing brand elements: Memorability, Meaningfulness, Transferability, Adaptability, and Protectability. Figure 4 provides more deep choice considerations in each criterion.

<p><b><u>MEMORABLE</u></b></p> <p>Easily recognized Easily recalled</p>
<p><b><u>MEANINGFUL</u></b></p> <p>Descriptive Persuasive Fun and interesting Rich visual and verbal imagery</p>
<p><b><u>TRANSFERABLE</u></b></p> <p>Within and across product categories Across geographical boundaries and cultures</p>
<p><b><u>ADAPTABLE</u></b></p> <p>Flexible Updatable</p>
<p><b><u>PROTECTABLE</u></b></p> <p>Legally Competitively</p>

*Figure 2: Brand Elements Choice Criteria (Keller 1998, 132)*

**Memorability.** Achieving a high level of brand awareness is a necessary condition to build brand equity. Brand elements can be inherently memorable and thus facilitate recognitions in purchasing settings. The clear nature names, symbols, and logos make brand memorable. (Keller 1998)

**Meaningfulness.** A set of questions need to be solved in this choice criterion. What consumers might expect to see from a brand in that product category? To what extent does a brand element deliver image about specific product that the brand probably likely be? Is a brand enough visual and verbal imagery and inherently fun and interesting? (Keller 1998)

**Transferability.** Two structural concerns of transferability are: thinking about how useful the brand element is for line or category extensions, both within or cross products classes; exploring how strong the brand element cross geographical barriers and market segments. (Keller 1998)

**Protectable.** Because of brand changes in consumers' mind possibly, and because of a need of remaining up-to-date contemporary, brand element is always updated over time. The more adaptable the brand element, the easier it is to be updated. (Keller 1998)

**Protectability.** The last consideration suggests which brand elements should be protected from both legal and competitive perspectives. Brand elements can be legally protectable under global context. Sometimes if a brand element could be protected legally, there is a possibility that such a phenomenon that such competitive factors hurt brand equity. It is important to reduce the possibility the rivals can imitate the brand by making a similar looking package. (Keller 1998)

### **Potential Resource to Enhance Brand Equity – Fans of Manchester United**

Manchester United was a well-known and well-respected brand before the Munich Air tragedy. However, glories behind the club were touched with tragedy, the young lives that destined for club's greatness was destroyed – the whole nation was drawn to Old Trafford, home of the club. Certainly, people would think that Munich disaster push for Manchester United's popularity. Fans not only remained

loyal followers, but also converted others to be supporters of the club. What result the phenomenon brought is the rise of televisions broadcasting as increase number of people and fans had chances to watch the team's matches. (Andrews 2004, 47)

The team performed excellently on the field after Air Crash 1958, and it became the first English club to win the European Cup ten years later. In a period of 1970s-1980s when British culture dominated world style with the figures like Beatles and James Bond, Manchester United was also improving its international appearance. The club's brand is enhanced through that time, and its brand equity was starting to build. Manchester United received supporters from all over the world and it was positioned in terms of the club's long-term status as a super-club. Meanwhile, some star-level players, such as George Best, Bobby Charlton and Dennis Law, used their idol effect to enlarge the club's brand effect. (See Andrews 2004, 48-50)

Manchester United developed its brand in a global stage, by building a concept of a Theatre of Dreams (another name of Old Trafford Stadium) with retailing format from shop to shop. Fans can experience its loved brand though purchasing its products. United developed partnerships with regional national businesses, it is assured of a profit on the sales of goods they provide. (See Bose 2000, 232)

Manchester United is a leading force who treats fans as a potential resource to enhance brand equity. As a result that fans' loyalty was increasing and firming, today its global fan base is 333 million all over the world.

## **2.4 Brand Identity**

The concept of brand identity is commonly based on brand. Once a brand is first created, brand identity is explored in depth. Upshaw (1995, 12-13) proposed that in the broadest sense, brand identity is a mix of words, images, ideas, and associations that form a customers' perception of a brand. The most important issue to remember about brand identity is that it grows and exists in beholder's mind. Therefore, brand identity is not what a brander makes, but what receivers perceive is made.

Franzen and Moriarty (2009, 108) highlighted that a brand is not a product but an approach to represent and identify a product. Branding is such long procedure of forming a unique product and system identity, which may be recognizable towards its audiences. They also presented three levels of brand identity: the physical level, the social level, and the mental level. In short, physical level shows all elements about a brand's physical appearance, such as product, building, shop display, offices, or packaging; social level is about personal self-concept, or in other words, social identity is a result of the perception of typical users of a brand; mental level – sometimes called self-identity or “who am I?” – is seen as the most important part of a person's identity.

However, there is a question in the popular mind, include me. Does brand identity equal to brand logo, since logo is the first and the straightest way for us to build brand perception? Budelmann, Kim, and Wozniak (2010, 7) interpreted that a logo is a picture that stands for a configuration of experiences that constructs a perception in the mind of someone interacts a brand. A brand identity expresses more than a logo, but identity is usually used in place of logo. Because we have to admit that a deep understanding of identity without consisting of logo would be like a tour of UK without a stop in London. A logo can influence customer perceptions through brand identity.

Referring to this thesis, brand identity internally related to brand equity and brand value. The nature of brand identity might be in forms of several questions: What is a brand symbol, a logo? What is brand value? What are brand characteristics? What are short-term and long-term goal of brand? Defining a brand identity is easy, but the point is how to establish and maintain relationship with customers on the basis of customer value proposition. During the establishing and maintaining stage, an enterprise should deliver its brand image to customers and then get customer experience back.

**Bulling MU Brand Identity – The Brand as Product, Organization, Person, and Symbol**



**As Product.** Products scope defined MU environment in which MU brand operates, its product is the game of football. Manchester United is part of English Premier League (EPL). Over the past two decade, on-field performance has been supported by obtaining the best players and managers regardless of national origin. As a result, MU has owned 19 league titles and more than 20 other champions. To maintain leadership positions, Manchester United has to play continually to high level over a long time. In addition, MU established more than 100 years and its solid franchises led to a strong local and global fan bases. This makes MU attractive propositions in the international marketplace. (Rosner & Shropshire 2010, 213)

**As Organization.** Brand identity always connects to the activities of its parent organizations, from its people and culture, organizational attributes, and outlook elements. Manchester United organization has gained a high reputation through its football management, mainly through “traditional club value” such as talented players and managers, “attacking football style” – a typical English football style, and “organizational outlook” – MU has always been a local but also global team especially when MU had tour in America and Asian and when MU signed international players. (Rosner & Shropshire 2010, 214)

**As Person.** MU Brand, like person, has personal attributed that different it from competitors. These personality factors include: “Youthfulness” – Matt Busby began MU youth orientation in 1953, the policy was continually conducted over the years still today. “Excitement” – MU’s attacking football attracted fans from worldwide, its players garnered excitement off the field. The players’ personalities add excitements to club images. “Competence” – It is a big challenge for any team to stay on-field success, but Manchester United is consistently achieving glories, both in England and Europe. (Rosner & Shropshire 2010, 214)

**As Symbol.** “Visual imagery and brand heritage become symbolic when they are uniquely associated with a product or service.” Red Devil nickname of Manchester United is famous through football world and club crest. The club’s history is always popular for fans everywhere and anytime. Brand heritage, history and de-

velopment consist of a unique Manchester United Culture. No matter the Youth Orientation that called “Busby Babes”, Revivment after Munich Air Crash, “the Legend of No.7” from George Best to CR7, or “Systematic Manager Alternation” from Mutt Busby to Alex Ferguson..., all these factors and actions make MU as a strong symbol in fans’ heart. (See Rosner & Shropshire 2010, 216)

## **2.5 Brand Value**

There is no standardized definition of brand value. The study has quoted Kapferer’s definition of brand value. In addition, Tatiana (2008, 15) proposed brand valuation is a process to assess brand value, which is illustrated by various brand valuation methods. These different perspectives to name brand value are classified in financial, behavioral and combined financial/behavioral approaches. Here a brand value definition that relating to financial approach is discussed.

Tatiana (2008, 16) indicated that financiers firstly put eyesight on the monetary value of a firm’s brands, therefore brand value is comprehended as a company’s capital asset. In Tatiana’s book, he presented Simon and Sullivan’s definition that brand value as an cash flow connecting branded products over unbranded ones. Furthermore, he described that consumer is the initial stage of building brand value. When consumer purchased products, revenues from products are assembled for company; the revenues exceed the attributes value of the tangible product. Thus the exceeding of revenue is the brand value.

Referring to this thesis, a brand’s revenue situation is the embodiment of its brand value, which always reflected from customers’ purchasing activities. Therefore the author here purports that brand equity is the relationship between buyer and seller in emotional dimension; brand value is the relationship between buyer and seller in functional dimension.

### **The Owner Doubled United’s Brand Value – Glazers Family**

“According to new analysis from Brand Finance, Manchester United FC’s brand value has grown from £197m in 2005, to £412m in 2011 under the Glazers guidance.” (PRLog 2011)

Glazers Family found that there was a 250% uplift in business value in 2005 when he purchased Manchester United for only £790m. After the brands grew impressively, Manchester United is now ranked as the most valuable sporting team in the world. (PRLog 2011)

Retaining Sir Alex Ferguson – the club’s ultimate ‘brand manager’ – is one of the key success factors of Glazers Family. The Glazers provide Ferguson sufficient space and necessary resources to make consistent successes on pitch, meanwhile to provide expertise off pitch. (PRLog 2011)

RANK 2011	RANK 2010	CLUB	2011 BRAND VALUE £M	2010 BRAND VALUE £M	% CHANGE	BRAND FINANCE BRAND RATING	COMMENTARY
1	2	MANCHESTER UNITED FC	412	373	10.6%	AAA	The Red Devils add another title to the trophy cabinet. Continued on pitch success, backed up with increased off pitch commercial innovation and clout.
2	1	REAL MADRID CF	401	386	3.9%	AAA	Real lose out to United this year, but huge revenues still drive strong brand value as major brands look to be affiliated with the club and its Galacticos.
3	3	FC BARCELONA	392	362	8.5%	AAA	The Catalans continue to impress the world with their sublime football, this year they took their first paid shirt sponsor to help tackle debt.
4	4	FC BAYERN MUNICH	308	301	2.3%	AAA	The biggest commercial revenues in world football ensure Bayern firmly remain as one of the big four brands - its prudent financial model sets it apart from its European peers.
5	6	CHELSEA FC	196	200	-2.1%	AA	With no trophies last year and £50m flop Torres failing to hit form the boys from Stamford Bridge see their brand value stagnate. The club needs a better global presence to challenge the leaders.
6	5	ARSENAL FC	188	215	-12.5%	AA	Things go from bad to worse for the Gunners, its under par contracted commercial deals and loss of superstars puts a strain on its ability to maximise its brand potential
7	7	AC MILAN	170	167	1.9%	AA-	Poor attendances at the aging San Siro stadium and a disappointing Champions League (CL) hold back AC's brand despite domestic success.
8	8	FC INTERNAZIONALE MILANO	164	160	2.8%	AA	Behind AC Milan in Serie A, Inter have done well to hold onto star man Wesley Sneijder.
9	9	LIVERPOOL FC	156	141	10.6%	AA	A resurgent Liverpool may not be in Europe this year, but the club's heritage remains strong and we expect the new owners to add some marketing magic to push brand equity up.
10	10	JUVENTUS FC	115	127	-9.9%	BBB+	Missing out on CL football combined with Italian clubs moving to collective media rights have dampened the outlook for Juve. Hopefully the new club owned stadium will provide a platform for growth.

*Picture 1: Top 10 Most Valuable European Football Brands*

*The thesis can summary here that brand equity is the additional value added to products and services, customer-based brand equity create brand knowledge on consumer's response; brand identity highlights what a brand stands for and im-*

*plies a promise to customers; brand value is the extra financial expression that a firm make from the products because of its brand equity and brand identity.*

*Therefore enhancing brand equity, strengthen brand identity and increasing brand value stand for a set of long-term brand management activities from organizations' point of view, aiming to keep relationship between brand creator and brand users. In the other words, those activities are in forms of brand strategies that compose branding procedure.*

*Furthermore, the brand strategies perform about how brand can survive in market and what brand can bring to customers. The three brand variables are crucial for any brander to make brand decisions. Therefore in next chapter a discussion about brand strategy based on branding decisions will be presented.*

### **3 BRAND STRATEGIES AND BRANDING DECISIONS**

Brand strategy is a complicated system of targets and objectives, programmatic decisions, and performance evaluations to decide if the activities fulfill original goals. (Franzen & Moriarty 2009, 52) Clark identified three stages that brands interact under their environment. The nature of brand strategy is changing into adaptive and controllable as a brand gains within all criteria. Stage 1 introduced that brand reflects its environment and then reacts to the surroundings. Stage 2 explained that brand adapts itself to the world so that increase success. Stage 3 showed that brand projects itself to the world and reforms the environment. (Franzen & Moriarty 2009, 27)

As we know that brand equity is an asset, which creates value exceeding product or service itself for enterprises and consumers. At the same time, brand equity connects to certain brand, if one brand term and brand image changed, the asset within the brand will be diminished correspondingly. Back to the Introduction of the thesis, the author has quoted Franzen and Moriarty (2009, 24) theory to explain why this paper considers brand strategies. Thus in this chapter, the paper is presenting the key brand strategies on the basis of various branding decisions that would lead one brand to be successful. The case of Manchester United is bonded with theory explanations.

#### **3.1 A Set of Brand Strategy: Five Branding Decisions**

According to Kotler's theory of Branding (1999, 407), branding raises five main challenges to the marketer. They are Branding Decision, Brand-sponsor Decision, Brand-name Decision, Brand –Strategy Decision, and Brand- Repositioning Decision. All of these decisions combine as a set of brand strategy.

This thesis supposes that brand strategy consists of a series of decisions, which is considered as firm's managing and marketing, in order to reinforce brand accumulation. From the next several parts in this chapter, brand strategies on the basis of branding decisions are unfolded and discussed.

### 3.2 Branding Decision

Branding decision is the first branding strategy decision; it refers to whether a company or an organization should establish a brand name for its product – To brand or not to brand? In the past most products operated without brand. Manufacturers and intermediaries sold commodities without supplier identifications. At that time the branding signs came out when craftspeople put trademarks the products to protect themselves and customers against inferior quality. (Kotler 1999, 407)

However, today branding varies a so strong force that anything does not go unbranded. Whatever one commodity that is about something to eat, to use, or to be served, it is definitely sold under strongly advertised brand names. (See Kotler 1999, 407)

Why do sellers give their products brand name and why is seller willing to pay the cost involved the product? Kotler (1999, 408) pointed several advantages what branding can create to seller.

- 1) A brand name makes seller to process orders and to traces problems easier.
- 2) A brand name or trademark gives legal protection of specific product attributes and features to seller.
- 3) Branding leads the seller to attract a loyal and profitable group of customers. The loyalty prevents sellers from competition.
- 4) Branding assists the seller to segment markets. Manchester United helps the organizer the segment market mainly within sport and entertainment.
- 5) A stronger brand helps to establish the corporate image, it can be easier for corporate to launch new sub-brands and to gain acceptance by middle distributors and final consumers.

Although branding is the tendency for market development of products, as individual enterprise, whether or not to put brand into practice should depend on products' situations. Once an organization get advantages that branding can create,

it will pay a large amount of cost for building, maintaining and protecting brand, such as package fees, advertising fees or legal issue fees. Therefore Kotler (1999, 407) found that in some cases there was no branding of certain products. “No branding” reduces the cost for package and advertisements and helps companies to reach cost leadership.

In general, this paper purports that the brand is a measurement for customers to choose and evaluate one product, like the package, place of origin, price and manufacture of one product. For brand marketer, there is minimum significant to make branding decision if customers only put eye sights on the looking and price of a product. Therefore, once a company decides to build a brand, forcing customers to reach a level of brand awareness is an urgent issue.

As we seen, branding is about the management of perceptions since brands are image in audiences’ mind. Perception is more important than reality, especially in branding marketing context. (See Dahlen, Lange & Smith 2010, 221)

Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000, 263) proposed three cornerstones of successful brand building: 1) Creating visibility in a crowded marketplace. These visibilities consist of share of voice, market dominance, category parity, and so on, all these impact brands to be stable within sight of customers; Recognition is critical in successful brands. 2) Associations are constructed through brand identity. Loyalty has to be performed in various features that differentiate with customers. 3) The development of meaningful relationships with customers is key to brand longevity.

Wasserman Elizabeth (2010) supposed that business can try to shape or form the company’s branding by different branding decisions; so many ideas and efforts go into branding by naming products, designing logos, and presenting services. Businesses put efforts on improving brand recognition in order to charge a premium for a product or a service.

However, customers are willing to pay more for a brand name if the product is admitted as a leading force and they believe they can get benefit from it. In addition, on the audiences’ side, they are interest in the brand’s recognition on what

the brand promise is. Therefore, branding decision, or which can be regarded as the term “brand, or no brand”, is a meaningful decision from initial stage of any business’s development. (See Wasserman Elizabeth 2010) In the following paragraphs, the case of Manchester United branding decision is presented.

### **Trying To Establish A Global Brand – Manchester United**

Manchester United has become one of the most famous and financially successful football clubs in the world. The brand of Manchester United is estimated with brand equity of \$ 285 million and intellectual property of \$300 million. As a brand, Manchester United is one of the most famous and recalled name in sport area. Newton Heath LYR is the name of the club in 1878, it renamed to Manchester United since 1904. Surely for its fans, Manchester United is popularly known as “Red Devil”. (Mbaskool 2011)

Manchester United became a global power brand after the Munich Air Tragedy in 1958. Since the team was rebuilt afterwards through its strong foundation and talented players, it claimed to the top of Europe ten years later, by achieving a champion of European Champions League at first time in the history. Moreover, Manchester United grew as an international brand because the legendary players that owned by the club were supported and crowd favorites all over the world. All players from different part of the earth fighting as one united force present the club as a unified team. (Mbaskool 2011)

During the latest two decades, off the pitch, some brands that associate as sponsors and partners of Manchester United were Umbro, Sharp, Vodafone, Nike, AIG, AON, and so on. A great number of revenue was also generated from merchandise and accessories that relate to Manchester United. (Mbaskool 2011) (There are further discussions of brand-strategy decision in the later part of the study.) Manchester United grown as a business and it is the richest football club in the world today.

### **Brand Positioning**



Once a company decides and builds its brand, its eyes have to move towards brand positioning. Kapferer (2008, 175) defined that positioning a brand refers to focus the distinctive features that make it differentiated from competitors and to appeal it to the public. Sengupta (2005, 17) noted that brand is not passive but active. Position stands for a whole or overall perception of a brand in audiences' mind. Positioning creates a unique, credible, sustainable and valued place in consumers' mind for brand.

Positioning is an imperative concept and process, which based on four main phrases: why a brand? For whom? When? Against whom? Positioning alarms us that all customers' choices are made by comparing. A product only can be considered if it is in the customers' choosing process. (Kapferer 2008, 176)

Let's move closer to brand positioning, Sengupta (2005, 17) mentioned four basic but crucial components relevant to positioning of brand: product class and market structure in which the brand compete; consumer segmentation; consumer perception of the brand; benefit offered by the brand.

### **What the Red Devil Is Positioning – United Fan Base**

A core attribute of the Manchester United brand is an essence of fan ownership, which means that fans and supporters are core positioning of Manchester United. Such real ownership is considered as an emotional bond that makes Manchester United brand an advantage than any other football clubs. Manchester United brand is growing faster and further beyond other traditional sport brands world while. As the paper stated above, fans from Asian regions are developing as a major force that pursuit MU brand. Among those, Chinese fans built Chinese market, which is becoming bigger than the UK for merchandise and license rights. (See Hall 2005)

United's customer database keeps stable at 11 million, which equals to that of Boots or Tesco's loyalty cards. Manchester United is highly confidential to forecast that the database will continually grow at an "exponential" rate. (Blitz 2011)

This paper supposes Manchester United has clear awareness about consumers' perception of the brand; by positioning towards fans from all over the world, it will get benefit from its brand at the same time.

Furthermore, all the factors and benefits above came into realize after Manchester United's brand had built. Both from the club's performance on field and the branding activities the club experienced out of field, a brand that positions Manchester United as a historical, glorious, and successive united is formed.

### 3.3 Brand-Sponsor Decision

For manufacturer, it owns some choices to decide brand sponsorship. Kotler (1999, 408) here introduced three main options that respect to brand sponsorship.

- **Manufacturer Brand:** the product is launched as manufacturer brand, or national brand.
- **Distributor Brand:** the product is formed by distributor brand, or reseller brand, or private brand.
- **Licensed Brand:** the product is manufactured under its own name, or under resellers' labels.

Manufacture brand happened when the manufacturer produce and market commodities under its own brand name. In other words, the producer is responsible for marketing the brand, which is owned by the producer. The marketing effort of a manufacturer brand is to put customers' loyalty into the manufacturer's name. (Business 2012)

Distributor brand became common in emergent chains. The early types of distributor brands were closed to grocery items. These chains were responsible for their own production, meanwhile managed wholesaling function. (De Chernatony, McDonald & Wallace 2011, 43)

Licensed brand is sometimes considered as a combination of manufacture brand and distributor brand. Licensed brand focus more on legal issues. Marton (2005)

stated that a branding licensing is the process of creating and managing contract between the brand owner and brand user.

Referring the brand characteristics and attributes, Manchester United brand is categorized as distributor brand, since it sells football-related costumes and accessories meanwhile gets sponsor from other field of business. Kotler (1999) compared the manufacture brand and distributor brand, and stated that distributor brand has two main advantages. There are comparisons between them by using the case of Manchester United.

1. Distributor brand, or private brand, is more profitable. The middleman has more recourses and possibility to search for manufacturers who will produce the private product as a low cost. It means the distributor can make a higher profit margin by being charged a lower price. (see Kotler 1999, brand-sponsor decision)
2. Distributors or retailers can increase more market power. A strong and multi-dimension brand, such as Manchester United, can distribute and re-sell products from other business fields, in order to extent market power and brand efforts. (see Kotler 1999, brand-sponsor decision)

Manchester United is a football club, the most acceptable commodities is sport-related accessories. However, based on its brand attribute, this multi-oriented distributor brand allocated many official sponsors. All those sponsors help Manchester United to become more profitable and more power in market. There are several official sponsors that are selected from Manchester United official website: <http://www.manutd.com/en/Club/Sponsors.aspx>.

**NIKE:** Its partnership of Manchester United that has begun since 2002. As a famous sport brand, NIKE “may” be a good choice for sport lovers to purchase. Furthermore, if someone is a fan of Manchester United and is also a supporter of NIKE, his or her buying motivation will be doubled. The fan is willing to buy a NIKE T-shirt that prints a Manchester United logo. Fans’ purchasing actions bring

a dramatically increase in profit for Manchester United, only because Manchester United is the reseller of NIKE, meanwhile it puts club's image in NIKE.

**HUBLOT:** It was the first Swiss watch luxury brand and made its name HUBLOT 30 years ago. HUBLOT developed three limited editions watches featuring Manchester United's Red Devils emblem on the dial. To some extent, HUBLOT brings the same market efforts and profit increase to Manchester United. Manchester United can be a retailer to sell watch to someone who pursuing luxury watches' enjoyment and fascinated matches' experiences.

**MISTER POTATO:** It is Malaysia's No.1 potato snack. Being available in Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, China, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Brazil and Africa, Manchester United and Mister Potato both retailer the snack. Fans around the world celebrate glorious moments of Manchester United with such super-duper taste of Mister Potato. Acting as a retailer brand, Manchester United is successful in food industry cooperated with Mister.

Besides the partnerships above, Manchester United also sells fragrance, book, jewellery, homeware, and daily equipment as retailer. Fans and customers can buy the products through the club's official online megastore, which is called UNITED DIRECT (address is <http://www.manutd.com/en/Shopping.aspx>), and real shop at Old Trafford Stadium.

### **Brand Sponsorship**

Allen (2010, xiii) introduced that traditional sponsors provided money to sport or event, got their benefits, and were satisfied. However, today's sponsors highly recognized that sponsorship is another media element of their marketing mix. Sponsorship should consist of components such as media, promotions, partnership, and extensions to get gain the greatest investment return.

Collett and Fenton (2011, 26) considered that sponsorship is a complicated marketing tool and the work needed to conduct effective sponsorship programs that an organization should not be overlooked. Nowadays it is one of the most powerful

approaches to bond brands with audiences through multiple channels and under experience-based contexts.

Sport is the area in which sponsorship has developed furthest. The term “sport sponsorship” always links to the concept of sponsorship (Lagae 2005, 39).

Sport sponsorship figured into marketing strategies of a company who intends to reach target markets by using sports property that is relevant with audiences. Sponsorship is developed into a resource that can create a competitive competence for a company. The resource implications of sponsorship should be an interest to company that operating in global markets. When a firm operates business out of its home country, the resource can enrich investments in manufacturing and marketing. It is strategic if an organization selects sponsorship in a global range; the sponsorship may be a source of international competitive advantage (see Amis & Cornwell 2005, 147-152).

#### **MU Always With Strong Sponsorships – Aon, DHL, Nike, Audi, EPSON...**

The world’s largest and most valuable football brand – Manchester United (MU) – reported in June 2009 that it signed a four-year shirt deal with American insurance giant Aon Corporation, the deal worth £80 million over four years. Aon hoped its partnership with MU would help to strengthen its brand recognition (Temporal 2010, 169). Aon replaced A.I.G (American International Group), which ceased its sponsorship it felt victim to the credit crunch and was bailed out by the U.S. government. (Pfanner 2009)

Manchester United has become the first Premier League team to own its training kit sponsorship. Old Trafford officials signed a four-year contract with the logistics giant DHL at August 2011. DHL’s logo would appear on United’s training kit as part of a £40 million four years deal, £10 million a season. The global presence was a perfect fit for the world’s most popular football club, and this strategic partnership made DHL more competitive to support MU in its continued success. (Keegan 2011)

Manchester United increased its global status as the world's biggest football club in 2002 by confirming a large sponsorship package, a 13-year contract with sportswear manufacture, Nike, worth £303 million. The deal was profitable for United since it could get Nike's half net profits from the licensing and retail operations. Nike and United would launch a grass-roots program that aimed at young players; it would cost £1 million per year and paid by Nike. (Harris 2000)



*Picture 2: AON Home Jersey & DHL Training Shirt*

Considering the marketing and sponsoring achievement Manchester United did, the thesis concludes that the club was, and is, making brand-sponsor decision as strategy in a logically process.

### **3.4 Brand-Name Decision**

Once an organization put task on brand-name strategy, any enterprises that plan to brand their products have to choose an appropriate brand name. Kotler (1999, 412) pointed out four strategies that are available for brand name choosing.

- 1. Individual Names:** An advantage of individual name strategy is that the firm does not connect its reputation to products. The firm's image will not be hurt if its products fail to reach good quality. This strategy impact the company to think about a best name for products.
- 2. Blanket Family Names:** There is less cost for brand development since it is unnecessary to research for name and to expenditure brand-name advertisements. If the manufacturer's name is strong, in addition, sales of those products will be considerable.

**3. Separate Family Names for All Products:** In some cases, it is not perfectible to use one blanket family name when a company produces different products. Sony, as a leading electronic equipment manufacture, produces mobile phones, CD walkman, computer, and TV set. Sony invents different family names for those products, such as Xperia phone, NWZ walkman, Vaio PC, and Bravia TV set.

**4. Company Trade Name Combined with Individual Product Names:** Some manufacturers tie the company name to specific brand name for each individual product.

Go back to the previews of brand-sponsor decision (Zhang, 2012), the thesis interpreted that Manchester United is classified as distributor brand; it sells football-related costumes and accessories in addition with products from other field of business. All kind of products are sold on the basis of its good brand reputation, thus the brand name of Manchester United is blanket family name.

Kotler (1999, 413) perceived that a company can choose a brand name from the name of founder, from product's lifestyle, from product's location, from product's quality, or from an artificial name.

A brand name should suggest something about the products' benefits and qualities; should be easy to pronounce, recognize and remember; should be distinctive; should not carry poor meanings in other countries and languages. (Kotler 1999, 413)

### **The Club's Name as The Brand Name – Manchester United**

Choosing a brand name is simple than choosing from a range of similar products. Imagine a customer has enough information about one product; he or she may select to buy a high-value brand of product. Brand name represent a long history of product development, the brand owner and manager have more power to maintain the brand if the brand is good one. Manchester United is always committed to attractive victory matches, thus we can say Manchester United is well supported because it has always been well supported. The fans are willing to be influenced

and tied with their love when they are purchasing MU costume, MU sport equipment, MU accessories, MU homeware, and whatever criteria of commodities. In this sense, there is no better choice to name the club's brand but "Manchester United"! (Szymanski 1998)

Whatever "Newton Heath LYR Football Club" in history, or "Manchester United Football Club" until 1997, football is the core activity. Therefore, to maximize the influence of the brand, the club removes the words "Football Club". Just these two words - "Manchester United"- create more possibilities for this brand shifting its position from only English football attribute to an international sport-leisure attribute. (see Schmidt & Ludlow 2002, 118)



*Picture 3: Manchester United team badge (brand) evolutions (1878-Today)*

Schmidt and Ludlow (2002, 117) supposed that piracy is a key issue if a brand's success has been fulfilled by merchandizing activities. The new marque should be specific to identify and difficult to simulate. "Manchester United" is unique and distinctive; it has not been, is not, and will not be imitated. In Chinese, Manchester United is written in simplified form as 曼联 and in traditional form as 曼聯.. Both of two forms of characters stand for a persevering and united team.

### 3.5 Brand-Strategy Decision

Kotler (1999, 413) believed that there are five alternatives within brand strategies for an enterprise to make brand-strategy decision. Table 1 of "Extension Matrix" (Anandan 2009, 179) shows the correlations about these five strategies.

- **Line Extensions:** an existing brand extends to new sizes or flavors in the existing product category;



- **Brand Extensions:** the already brand extends to new-product categories;
- **Multibands:** brands is introduced in the same product category;
- **New Brands:** such new brand is established for a new category product;
- **Cobrand:** A bond brand connecting two or more popular brands by co-operating in the same product.

	Same Product Category	Different Product Category
Existing Brand Name	Line Extensions	Brand Extensions
New Brand Name	Multi Branding	New brands and Co-Branding

*Figure 5: Extension matrix*

### 3.5.1 Line Extensions

Line extensions refer to introduce additional items in same products category with the same brand. For example, launch new flavors, forms, colors, compositions, and change the package size. (Kotler 1999, 414)

A line extension refers to take an existing product, change it attributes, such as packages, ingredients, formulations, and sizes, and then place this new product line to the customer. Many consumer products are placed in retail stores and web sites (for example Manchester United “megastore” and “Direct United” online shop). Most consumer products companies implement some types of line extension in brand planning. Manchester United owns its product lines that born from a single product. (See Davis 2010, 74)

Anandan (2009, 179) believed that line extension is the most economical and fastest way to introduce new products. Because line extensions happened to be the cheapest way of new product introduction, many products are in the form of line extensions.

Line extension often brings benefits to companies. The main advantages are:

1. Line extension can extend the already products survival time. In general a failure rate for new product is between 80%-90%; it is difficult for consumer to accept a new product.
2. Line extension satisfies market segmentations better. By creating different ingredients of one type of product, customers in different needs can be served better.
3. A complete product line prevents attacking from competitors. Competitors find it is hard to penetrate their products into others' if others' product lines have no gaps to be filled in. (see Kapferer 2008, 223-227)

However, at the same time, line extension can and often do involves risks. The main disadvantages are:

1. Line extension may lose a brand name's specific meaning on the downside. With the constantly extended of product line, the characteristics and images of one brand will be faded, customers will feel more difficult to recognize and choose a brand.
2. Line extension would become disordered because of the great power of former brand. If there is a lack of sales, benefits from line extension cannot charge against the cost of development and promotion.
3. If consumer cannot distinguish between old and new products, both those products will be fight against each other in the same product line. (see Kapferer 2008, 223-227)

Keller (1998, 453) argued that a line extension is one of the two general categories of brand extensions, which will discuss in Chapter 3.5.2. Because he thought that a line extension is when the parent brand – an existing brand that gives birth to a brand extension – is used to brand a new kind of product that focuses on new market segment, under a product category currently served by the parent brand.

Most of the new products are line extensions. In 1990, Keller (1998) showed that 63% of products entered into market were line extensions, and another 18% were category extensions, which is the other category of brand extension above.

Manchester United is a brand on the basis of football club. The core activity of Manchester United is football match, thus at an initial stage of its products development, only on-field jerseys are sold for fans, include home kit, away kit, and goalkeeper kit. In order to fulfill satisfaction of different ages and gender of people, each kind of jerseys launched several alternatives, such as theses for men, for women, for kids, and even for little infants. Nowadays, not only can buy match jerseys, fans but also have a lot of choices to purchase other kinds of Manchester United brand costume. Training jackets and pants, theme fashion t-shirts, retro shirts, hoodies and other criteria enrich fans' purchasing. (See United Direct 2012)

Manchester United retails different categories of club theme merchandises. Not only products in *costume range* that mentioned above, Manchester United but also provide new categories of merchandises. (More explanations in brand-extensions part) Here the thesis only discusses the line extensions that Manchester United implement within each different range.

Merchandises in *homeware range* consist of kitchen homeware, bathroom homeware, bedroom homeware; Merchandises in *equipment range* are launched in the form of luggage, boots, accessories, and golf belongings; Merchandises in *souvenirs range* are stationery, flags & pennants, toys & games, and so on. (See United Direct 2012)

As the number of fans is increasing year by year, a growing consumption market for fans is forming.

### **3.5.2 Brand Extensions**

Brand extension refers to a firm that uses its existing brand name to launch new products in other categories. If a company intended to move their brand name it must research how well the brand's associations fit the new product. A best result come out when the brand name maintain or raise the sales of both the new product

and the existing product; a neutral result would be that the new product sells well without affecting the sales of the existing product; a worst result could be that the new product fails and also hurts the sales of the existing product. (Kotler 1999, 414-416)

Keller (1998, 451-452) defined brand extensions as a company established brand name to introduce a new product. Here he gave some concepts concerning brand extensions: “Sub-brand” - a new brand name is bonded with an existing brand, “Parent brand” – an existing brand that gives birth to a brand extension, “Family brand” – the parent brand associated with multiple products through brand extensions.

Loken, Ahluwalia, and Houston (2010, 11-14) interpreted more about these three brands. “Sub-brand extension” means the parent brand name is connected to the brand extension with another name created by a company, such as Toyota Camry under Toyota, Canon PowerShot under Canon, and Courtyard under Marriott. “Parent brand” such as Toyota, associates all the individual products of the brand. “Family brand” is the principal name that gives to brands or lines within a category, such as Toyota includes Camry and RAV4.

Brand extensions is required to build connections that would help the consumer communicate them with their brands. Once consumers reached a new level of complication and sophistication, it would be limited that the product identity only implants a logo onto merchandise. Customers are born to make connections and they are the receiver of one brand. Brand extensions bring more possibility to make people establishing brand awareness. (See Lindström 2005, 129-130)

There are three main reasons for brand extensions. Firstly, **Natural causes**. A brand may produce a product that is familiar with its original offering, but satisfies different desires of audiences. The extensions are a natural development as branders to explore needs and wants of the consumers. Secondly, **Market growth reductions**. Enterprises broaden their brand portfolio if their existing marketplaces show a sign of slower growth. Thirdly, **Confidence of brand invincibility**. The first and second reason may be emerged after research and investigation, but

this reason is based on a thought that “our brand has been successful in one or more market; it will be a star in others naturally”. (Temporal 2010, 130-131)

The brand extensions perspectives bring two radical modifications to marketplaces. The first modification is that brand extensions maintain a brand at being single and long-lasting, which can be also expressed and embodied in different products and categories. For example “Palmolive” stands for softness thus it makes soap, shower gel, and shampoo. The second modification is that brand extensions redefine the historical brand benefit by placing it in a higher order value. Brand extensions transfer brand value from tangible to intangible, from single product category to multiple varieties; it makes a brand to involve a wider range of products. (Kapferer 2008, 296-297)

Keller (1998, 455) highlighted that for any enterprises, the question is not if they should begin brand extensions, but when, where, and how the brand should be extended. Kotler (1999, 415) stated that brand extensions indeed offer many of the same benefits as line extensions, however, like line extensions, brand extensions also involves risks. Occasionally, Keller concluded the advantages and disadvantages of brand extensions. See the figure 3 and 4.

**Facilitate new product acceptance**

- Reduce risk perceived by customers
- Increase the probability of gaining distribution and trail
- Increase efficiency of promotional expenditures
- Reduce costs of introductory and follow-up marketing programs
- Avoid cost of developing a new brand
- Allow for packaging and labeling efficiencies
- Permit consumer variety-seeking

**Provide feedback benefits to the parent brand and company**

- Clarify brand meaning
- Enhance the parent brand image
- Bring new customers into brand franchise and increase market coverage
- Revitalize the brand
- Permit subsequent extensions

*Figure 3: Advantages of brand extensions (Keller 1998, 455)*

Confuse or frustrate consumers  
 Encounter retailer resistance  
 Fail and hurt parent brand image  
 Cannibalize sales of parent brand  
 Diminish identification with any one category  
 Hurt the image of parent brand  
 Dilute brand meaning forgo the chance to develop a new brand

*Figure 4: Disadvantage of brand extensions (Keller 1998, 464)*

After the thesis discussed such theories concerning brand extensions, the author of the thesis point out two predominant factors, or “two STRONGs”, that could determine a successful brand extension.

**The awareness about the core brand must be STRONG in consumers’ mind.**

Brand extensions should be implemented based on brand awareness, to where a brand extends depends on the awareness that customers towards the core brand. As experiences, when we are buying something, we are easily influenced by the familiarities of the brand. Those familiarities, such product types, functions, price, or position, are the directions to which a brand extends.

**The similarity between extended products and core brand must be STRONG.**

The extended products are from core brand, thus core brand spreads effects to the extended products. As long as the extended product image corresponds to the original brand image in customers’ mind, customers would accept the products. If an extended product fall away from the original concept of core brand, the brand extension reveals to be meaningless.

Manchester United retails different categories of club theme merchandises. Not only products in *costume range* that mentioned above, Manchester United but also provide new categories of merchandises in *homeware range* consist of kitchen homeware, bathroom homeware, bedroom homeware; Merchandises in *equipment range* are launched in the form of luggage, boots, accessories, and golf belongings; Merchandises in *souvenirs range* are stationery, flags & pennants, toys & games, and so on. (See United Direct 2012)

The current brand extensions have been directed to sport-related products. From a constructive point of view, whether there are possibilities that United's merchandises extend into other fields, such as business field, technology field, or entertainment field. The assumptions can be test in the empirical part of the study, by doing research on fans.

### **3.5.3 Multibrands**

Multibrands refer to additional brands that are introduced in the same product category. In specific situations, an organization uses multibrands strategy to try to set up different features or appeals to different buying motivations (Kotler 1999, 416).

Multibrands can also permit a company to use more shelf space at distributors and to prevent its main brand from setting up brands that belong to its own from either side of it (Klopper 2006, 299).

A firm uses multiple brand names for its differentiate products and explores target customer loyalty to those single brand. The firm can better target and position products in multiple market segments (Capon & M. Hulbert 2007, 306).

In the view of this paper, multibrands implementation is on the basis of existing product category to create various brand names, in order to fulfill multiple target market and to satisfy audiences from different backgrounds. Multibrands strategy is good for market growth. No individual brand is compatible to develop a certain market, but that many competitors join together helps the market to be advanced and mature. For example, if a wholesale market only includes one or two eyeglasses shops, the market is difficult to be competitive; if a number of eyeglasses shops open in the market, although competition among them is brutal, but the whole market turn to be vigorous meanwhile consumers hold more choices when they are purchasing. Therefore multibranding strengthens one product's common advantage. The emerging of multiple brands supports a whole market grows in a healthy way.

Wolfgang, Maznevski, & Steger (2007, 78) argued that multibranding impacts enterprises to cover market in highest possible. When the market is maturing,

needs from customers become segmental, at the same time, a certain brand cannot touch every customer's face but keep its current style and positioning. Thus, more and more enterprises introduce multiple brands to segment market. Furthermore, for each company, such an action not only limits the expansion of competitors, but also defends its main brand in the price war.

Knowles, Diamantis, and El-Mourhabi (2004, 96) highlighted that Multibrands can also be considered as a sub-category of brand extension and the opposite of brand leveraging. One main reason for an organization to practice multibrands strategy is to protect and support core brand.

The paper here supposes that multibranding happens to be significant when the image of core brand need to be protected. There is an example of Disney from the author's own perception. Since ten years ago, Disney used many brands when producing films in order to protect brand equity. Such brand names as Buena Vista Home Entertainment, Buena Vista International, and Buena Vista Music Group create opportunities for Disney to produce diversified films; Disney's image could be protected and intensified.

Although multibrands strategy impels market growth, covers and segments market, and meanwhile protects core brand; Nevertheless, Kotler found that there is a major pitfall when introducing multibrands.

There is a possibility that each new brand gain only a small market share, or none of them be profitable. One organization disperses its resources over those brands instead of establishing a highly profitable brand. "A company's brands within a category should cannibalize the competitors' brands and not each other. The net profits with multibrands should be larger even if cannibalism occurs." (Kotler 1999)

Besides the pitfall Kotler mentioned, the author derives another limitation, which is the large cost for brand promotion. Once an enterprise launched multibrands, it is unable to allocate enough resources to those brands that have high competence to gain profits. For those enterprises that are lack of strength, multibranding is im-



possible to be implemented if its brand sales-revenue cannot cover its brand promotion and survive cost.

Manchester United is a football-orientated brand. It has been a mature brand in sport field, but meanwhile it is an emerging brand in business field. MU currently is not capable to perform as excellent as P&G, which owns 24 multibrands that mainly focus on consumer goods and personal care. (See P&G 2011) However, multibrands will be a strategic way to develop and extend MU brand in the future.

#### **3.5.4 New brands**

When a company launches products in new categories, new brand names are used if it noticed that none of its existing brand names are suitable for these products (Kotler 1999, 416). The potential to gain a key association for a product class, especially a newly introduced association, is one rationale for a new brand (Aaker 2004, 214).

Aaker (2004, 213-216) highlighted that the development of a new brand is expensive and difficult. He continually stated that multiple brands make brand architecture complex from both the company and customer, thus a separate brand has to be established and supported only when a strong need to be proved.

A new brand name would tell a story about firm's different offerings and position a breakthrough benefit. Such brand name should deliver a meaningful advance in technology and function. For example, when a Chinese healthy-products company "YangShengTang" (English meaning: Body by Nature) planned to launch a new kind of drinking water, it found that the brand name was so abstract for this specific product; thus YangShengTang created a better brand name – "Farmer Spring". Such drinking water was extracted from nature spring in East Lake, provides customer a sweet, pure, and natural feeling, which is contrast from normal mineral water. Nowadays, Farmer Spring is a leading brand of drinking water in Chinese market.

There is an internal relationship between brand extensions and new brands. Brand extensions use those successful brand names to launch other newly or improved products. Main advantages are: (see Pringle & Field 2008, 155-162)

- The decrease of cost for new brands' communication and promotion,
- The faster familiarity about new brands' that in consumer's mind, and
- The enhancement of core brand image.

However, there are also risks involved from brand extensions to new brands. There will be a greater possibility of new products to be failed, if the new brands did not match the original brand image; once new brands fall down, the original one must be hurt. (See Pringle & Field 2008, 155-162)

Alike multibrands strategy mentioned in Chapter 3.5.3, Manchester United currently has not developed new brands strategy yet, but it is deserved and promising for MU to progress in the future.

### **3.5.5 Cobrands**

Cobranding, also called dual branding, refers to two or more famous brands cooperate in an offer; it is a rising approach brand development nowadays. The operator from each brand looks forwards to a strong preference or purchase emotion from other brand name. Each brand wishes to reach a new group of customers by bonding with the other brand. (Kotler 1999, 416) Kotler introduced mainly four types of cobranding.

- *Ingredient cobranding*: For example Volvo uses Michelin tires or Betty Crocker's brownie mix adds Hershey's chocolate syrup.
- *Same-company cobranding*: For example General Mills advertises Trix and Yoplait yogurt.

- *Joint venture cobranding*: Japanese Sony Corporation cooperates with Swedish Ericsson Telecommunication to launch a new brand name as Sony Ericsson still 2011.
- *Multiple-sponsor cobranding*: For example Apple, IBM, and Motorola alliance technologically in the case of Taligent.

There is a key reason why those organizations intent to be mixed. Many manufacturers produce components of products that can enter into final branded products, but in most cases these individual identities get lost. The manufacturer wishes its brand to be highlighted as element of the final products, thus to finds another strong and successful brander and get association; the cobrands utilize advantages from each side of company, integrate resources, enlarge brand reputation, and expand sales amount. (See Kotler 1999,417)

Temporal (2010, 106) also assessed that cobranding can be cross-platform marketing sometimes; it is increasingly popular for companies to explore new paths in order to reach target customers. Temporal supposed there are three main intentions for cobranding. One is that firms reach more of the consumers who might be of someone else. Another is that cobranding impacts marketing costs to be share, if a major campaign costs more than \$100 million. Certainly, additional major reason is that as a business opportunity, cobrands gives more potential benefits to one's own customer base and thus enhance its brand loyalty.

It is always important for brander to consider a cobranding opportunity before he makes a commitment, as a process of actions must be in place for achieving success. Then brander 1) should ensure the target customers of his partners have common base of "demographic and psychographic profiles". Brander 2) must ensure his partners have brand values similar to those of his own brand. Brander 3) in addition must ensure his partner will not fade his own brand name away. These three measurements are commonly the preconditions for any kinds of cobranding. If all actions go smoothly, cobranding is a natural soil for brand portfolio growth without products launches and extensions. (see Temporal 2010, 107)

Begemann (2006, 31) acknowledged cobranding can be an alternative to fill brand gaps. Cobranding can be used besides joint-ventures as strategic alliances and existing brand development. Indeed, cobranding can be practiced as normal brand or line extensions since it shares greatly with these brand strategies; Cobranding requires low financial investments, if compared to build a new brands or organizations; Cobranding does not emphasize on resources sharing like restrict strategy alliances, but it focuses on brand sharing, because operational integration is lower than in strategy alliance, and companies are rather placed by each side than developed together. Cobranding, that focuses on brand sharing, is credible to fulfill crucial function of directly communicating combined competencies to consumers.

Referring to the writer of this study, cobranding is a modern action that is implemented more frequently. Each side of the cooperation utilizes the other's brand advantages to raise its own brand, to increase sales revenue, meanwhile to save the time and cost for entering a certain market. A famous cobranding case "Intel Inside" tells audiences that the Finished-products Company could possibly strengthen its competitiveness by cooperating mature brand of Components Company. Because of the brand effects of Components Company, consumers are more compelling to concern such new cobrands product; as a result, brand loyalty of the Finished-products Company will be formed in consumers' mind.

Furthermore, the writer intends to argue some risks or pitfalls about cobranding. Of course, cobranding can bring dual benefits to both sides of brander; however, some problems or conflicts might be occurred if the benefits were not balanced. Such unbalanced benefits gain mostly caused by differentiated brand recognitions. Within cobranding, a brand image with higher recognition could be hurt in customers' minds if some operational problem happened in the company with lower brand recognition. In the other words, cobranding at this time causes mutual-negative influences between two companies so that weaken their risk-resistance ability. Why did the brand "Sony Ericsson" turn into "Sony" again? Why did Sony takeover Ericsson's full shares? In the author's eyesight, the unbalanced benefits gains and differentiated brand recognitions lead to a broke-up between these two brands.

## **MU & ZONG – A New Market Is Opening**

There are many opportunities for cobranding in every industry. Here is a case between football industry and telecommunication industry.

ZONG is the first international brand of China Mobile, launched in Pakistan in 2008. The company is often cited as China Mobile (Pakistan) or CMPak. (ZONG 2012) Manchester United signed a three-year partnership with ZONG in Pakistan in October 2011. ZONG launched a highly anticipated “Manchester United co-branded SIM”. The SIM includes services such as ‘Follow the Star’, which means audiences can get free minutes and SMS if their favorite player scores a goal, or get dial tones in players’ own voice. Customers can also win prizes including MU merchandise and match. (Iqbal 2011)

There are more than 10 million fans in Pakistan. Zong now is a great partner for United in Pakistan. Partnering with United will help the club to communicate directly with millions of its supporters. Zong will be a key player in allowing MU to bring passions and excitements of Manchester United to fans in Pakistan. “Using our digital assets to engage our global fan base is an increasingly-important part of our commercial strategy and we are very excited about the possibilities presented by this partnership.” Richard Arnold, the Reds commercial director, said. (Club News 2011)



Picture 4: Cobrand – Manchester United & Zong

### **3.6 Brand- Repositioning Decision**

In some situations, Kotler (1999, 418) indicated that however well a brand is positioned, the firm needs to reposition it afterwards, only when the company faces new rivals in the marketplace or changes customers’ perceptions.

However, the reasons for a brand to reposition, indeed, are far from what Kotler concluded above. Kennedy (2010) listed 5 reasons when a brand needs repositioning:

1. **Sales are decreasing.** This is a top and direct reason that a brand needs repositioning. When sales are shrinking, the firm has to figure out what was happening and has to realize its brand needs to be refreshed.
2. **The target customers have not been the best target any more.** The target audiences can be shift and not stable forever in competitive marketplace. The brander should think about are the customers the really ones who create you benefit?
3. **The products and services have developed dramatically.** Overtime, the external environment is changing meanwhile the firm is developing, it launches new products, refines old products and so on. What the firm had done help it stay relevant and fresh. However after changing offering over a long time, its branding strategy may no longer reflect what the brand really is, thus it needs change.
4. **New rivals own a better value proposition.** It is frequently to see sometimes the competition can render the firm's original position, new competitors may take place of the firm's position with something better, and thus the firm is easy to leave behind.
5. **The brand is outdated instead of established in customers' mind.** For established brand, sometimes customers trust its brand not because its brand is good, but is old. Customers may see the brand as outdated, out of touch and irrelevant.

It is difficult to forecast whether a brand capture true success through repositioning, but one matter is for certain – if a brand were not reposition at the right time it could lose opportunity forever. (Kennedy 2010)

In the past, repositioning was thought as changing the audiences' preferences associated with a brand because the meaning of a brand was made related to a changing environment. There would be numerous of new products failing in the new market every year, repositioning thus is viewed as a way to revise both old and new brands. (Kumar 2007, 65) Kumar (2007) stated that there are commonly two ways for a feasible repositioning:

1. Strengthening the associations that were initially connected with the brand, which is an established brand.
2. Changing the associations for a new brand that has failed in the market or the one that has not done well.

Doyle (2000) proposed that repositioning a brand is a viable option if the brand has a weak position in marketplace. Manager in the firm has to update its product through quality improvement or function and design innovation, to offer extra products and services alongside the core products, or to change customers' believe about the product's attributes.

From the point of the writer, brand repositioning reveals a manager or branders' market insight. A mature brand needs repositioning to maintain its competitiveness but a immature brand also needs repositioning to extend its influence. For both types of brand, companies need to create new segment market and enrich products' value points, meanwhile to impact new requirements for customers.

### **3.7 Summary of the Theoretical Framework**

Chapter 1 was the introduction part of the whole thesis, it inserts 3 main sections. The background of the study introduced different roles played in brand game – six levels of meaning of a brand, and critical terminologies concerning brand - brand equity, brand identity and brand value. Then it explained why the study concerns brand strategy in branding decisions way. In addition, the author explained why the thesis used a football club as a case, and introduced who is Manchester United.

Chapter 2 began with a definition of brand: a name or term, a sign or symbol that intends to recognize goods or services of seller from those of others. Then the author used McDonald's example described six levels of meaning of a brand. Moreover, the study illustrated brand equity builds the relationship between buyer and seller in emotional dimension; brand value builds the relationship between buyer and seller in functional dimension; and brand identity combined brand equity and value and connected buyer and seller in another scope.

Chapter 3 was the core of the whole thesis. It mentioned that brand strategy consists of a series of decisions, which is considered as firm's managing and marketing, in order to reinforce brand accumulation. Thus the author inserted a set of brand strategy – 5 branding decisions. Actually these 5 decisions is a process for operating and managing a brand: Deciding to establish a brand, the firm has to target its product's and brand's categories – Manufacturer brand? Distributor brand? Or Licensed brand? Then the firm needs to consider its brand name. When the brand has grown, various brand strategies will be implemented. Whether a brand needs line-extensions or brand-extensions? Is it possible to create multi-brands, new brands or cobrands? After one round of branding activities, shall a company reposition its brand? All those questions are answers with the case of Manchester United.

*Here is the summary discussion of main theories used previously.*

*Making marketing decision is one part in marketing management; one important action is making product line and brand line. Branding is a major issue in product strategy. Long-term investment, such as advertising, promotion and packaging, helps to develop a branded product. In addition, manufacturers get market power by building own brand. Brand strategies and brand challenges are dealt with branding decisions. (Marketing Management. Kotler, Philip, 1999)*

*Every organization intends to have its own brand. Surprisingly, even persons now also want to be managed like brands, such as sports stars and entertainment stars. Whether for organizations or individuals, brand could consolidated their business or increase their profitablity and reputation. Therefore, looking at brand as stra-*



*tegic assets is what businessman emphasized. (The New Strategic Brand Management. Kapferer Jean-Noël. 2008)*

*Managers construct a brand portfolio strategy can support a company's business plan and create relevance, differentiation, energy, leverage, and clarity. A set of powerful, cohesive brand strategies have enabled managers to revitalize brands, support business growth, and create discipline in confused, bloated portfolios of endorser brands, co-brands, and brand extensions. (Brand Portfolio Strategy. Aaker, David A. 2004)*

*Recognizing the potential intangible value of brands, the brander creates a highest priority for almost all organizations. Successful branding nowadays needs new emphasized elements, such as engaging in participation marketing, crafting design-based products, developing multiple channel and communication strategies and son on. Brand management offers insights view that can successful lymanage brand in future. (Brands and Brand Management Loken, Barbara, Ahluwalia, Rohini, & Houston, Michael J. 2010)*

## 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research is not only a process of collecting information as is suggested, but also a procedure of answering doubtful questions or creating what has not exist. (Goddard & Melville 2001, 1) This chapter of thesis concentrates on research methodology that has been used in the whole study. First of all, the paper explains the research method; secondly, it introduces the sample and data collection in the research; thirdly, the tool for analysing the collected sample and data is presented; at last, the validity and reliability of the study is discussed in this chapter.

### 4.1 Research Method

The research process aims to produce new thoughts and deep understanding of a certain topic. Mainly the process implemented by three forms: (See Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005)

- Exploratory Research: it identify and define a problem;
- Constructive Research: it exams theories and proposes solutions to a problem;
- Empirical Research: it uses empirical evidences to measure the feasibility of a solution.

The research method of this study: Brand strategy in branding decision way of Manchester United is classified as constructive research. Constructive Research is the second step in research methods. It encompasses the area of theory – Brand Management and Brand Strategy, and it doesn't require your research based on solidity. It is more based upon theories, hypotheses , and case studies; it is used to test theories. (See Research info, 2012)

There are two major research designs: Qualitative Research and Quantitative Research. The researcher chooses one of them according to the nature of the research objectives he or she wants to achieve and the research problems that need to be solved. (Creswell, 2008)

**Qualitative research** is one kind of inquiry appropriate to certain subject matters. The aim is to collect and gather deeper understanding of human action or behav-

ious. The qualitative method investigates the “why” and “how” of decision making, not just what, where, or when. Therefore, smaller but targeted samples are more popular to use and conduct, rather than large random samples. Put in briefly, qualitative research is an unstructured methodology that based on small samples, in order to provide insight and understanding. (See Denzin K & Lincoln 2005, 1-3)

**Quantitative research** is a more systematic and scientific investigation quantitative tool, phenomena and relationship. It aims at developing and employing mathematical models, theories, or assumer which belong to natural sense. Measurement is the main and central issue because it provides a basic connection between “empirical observation” and “mathematical expression”. Generally, quantitative research is a structured methodology that based on medium or large samples, it seeks to quantify the data especially provides form of statistical analysis. (See Black 1999, 9-10)

In this study, the focus is on the quantitative research method rather than the qualitative research method. As a branding criterion of research thesis, quantitative techniques are seen to be a better option, since it can describe, explain and test the different branding strategies. Among those techniques, survey, which is carried out by either interviews or questionnaires or both, is a suitable way of describing and explaining some aspects of a population. (White 2003, 49) Survey is used in this thesis as an approach of branding research; opinion and attitude surveys on fans of Manchester United help the author to get constructive suggestions about MU’s brand strategies that based on customers’ perceptions.

## **4.2 Sample and Data Collection**

To improve the brand strategies that Manchester United implemented based on fans’ perceptions is the main objective of the thesis. In the research, the survey is mainly conducted by questionnaires. (See APPENDIX 1 – English questionnaire that delivered to internet over the world, APPENDIX 2 – Chinese questionnaire that mainly processed in Chinese internet users.) The questionnaires were sent out in the form of website link, which was created by the author with “E-lomake”. E-

lomake is online software used to make web-based questionnaires and surveys within the specific network of Vaasa University of Applied Sciences. (VAMK 2012)

Research is usually a systematic work to seek truth. It mainly performs as collecting data, analysing the data and finding the conclusion. (Khanzode 2004, 3) Therefore, data is the one most important element in a whole process of research. The research methodology of this paper includes both two categories of data – primary data and secondary data.

As in academic marketing research, there are commonly two essential sources of data: Secondary data and primary data. The secondary data generally are obtained from published sources or collected by other organizations and are made freely or commercially available. They may have indirect value and sometimes are out of date, therefore any authors of paper works should pay attention to data's limitations. (Gilligan & Hird 1986, 82-83) The readers can find a great number of secondary data that is applied in this paper both in theoretical and empirical part, but more frequently in theories. For the purpose of this study, the author used books, articles and literatures with target and useful secondary information.

The primary data is where the researcher describes his or her own work and the process that can be used to make conclusions and practical outcomes. (Macqueen 1998, 52) The primary data are created and obtained for a specific use from knowledgeable individuals. A common phenomenon is easy to encounter is sampling problems which could be costly obtain, or biased subjective. However they are very specific to a problem. (Gilligan & Hird 1986, 82-83) To collect the primary data, quantitative research is the main method to be conducted.

In this study, the tool to create and collect primary data is questionnaires. At the end of primary data collection, there are totally 138 respondents are gathered, out of 1200 sample population; the respond rate is 11.5% (See figure). Among the 138 respondents, there are 125 are valid, the valid respondent rate is 90.6% (See figure).

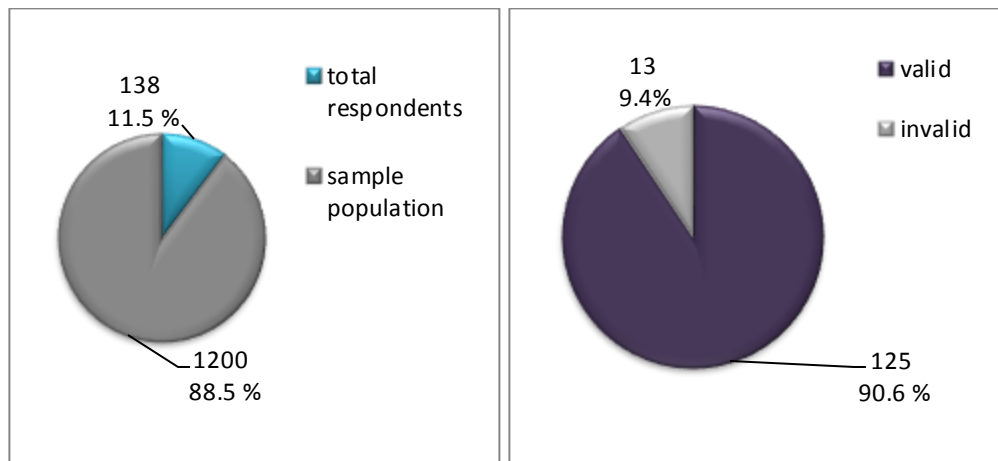


Figure 6: Sample and data collection

### 4.3 Questionnaire Design

Questionnaire on Manchester United brand strategies in branding decisions way was designed and delivered to fans of MANU all over the world. The questionnaire consists of four parts, and each part of the questions is corresponding to the theoretical framework of the thesis:

1. The participants' basic information: it asks the audiences about their gender, age, continent, how long have been a fan of MANU, and what categories of match is their favorite.
2. The six levels of meaning of MANU brand: receivers have the rights to rate and score the six levels of meaning about MANU, the author can see how they evaluate MANU from those factors such as attributes, benefits, users and so on.
3. Brand equity, brand identity and brand value of MANU brand: according to these three important elements concerning a brand, participants present their feelings about MANU's equity, identity and value reflection on their mind. Totally even questions exist in this section.
4. MANU brand strategies based on branding decisions. It is the main part through the whole questionnaire. It asks people's opinions how MANU

achieve its brand strategies in branding decisions way. Though people's answer chosen, more analysis and explanations based on the responds will be shown in empirical findings in details.

To avoid misinterpretations, the questions and instructions were designed precisely in two languages: English version delivered all over the world; Chinese version faces to Chinese fans. For open-ended questions, respondents can give own answers in the ways they like.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis Method**

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel are applied as the tools to analyze the data that collected from samples. In addition, Microsoft PowerPoint is used to make graphs. Results from the questionnaires were illustrated by frequency tables, percentage figures, proportional pie charts, and other literal explanations.

#### **4.5 Reliability and Validity**

Measurement experts held that every measurement approach should ensure certain qualities; two commonly used technical in measurement are reliability and validity. An assessment, has to be gives the assessor accurate information about the performance of the individual. (Educational assessment 2012)

**Reliability** refers to the extent to which a questionnaire, in this paper, has the same results on repeated trials; it is the stability or consistency of scores. Reliability concerns about scores not people. In brief, the degree of this paper's responses on a survey has to keep the same over time. (Miller 2009)

**Validity** refers to the extent to which the measurement what it purports to assess. For something to be valid it must be reliable but also measure what it is intened to assess. (Miller 2009) For this study, a test that is used to figure out the fans' perceptions on Manchester United brand strategy is valid if its scores are directly related to MU's fans and branding decisions strategies that mentioned in whole thesis.

In order to enhance the validity of study, theoretical framework was drawn from previous studies: Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000; Aaker & McLoughlin 2007; Amis & Cornwell 2005; Andrews 2004; Bose 2000; Budelmann, Kim & Wozniak, 2010; Clifton & Ahmad 2009; Dahlen, Lange & Smith 2010; Dolles & Söderman 2011; Kapferer 2008; Keller 1998; Kotler 1999; Lagae 2005; Loken, Ahluwalia & Houston 2010; Rosner & Shropshire 2010; Schmidt & Ludlow 2002; Tatiana 2008; Temporal 2010; Upshaw 1995; Van Gelder 2003; Weng 2006;

#### **4.6 Limitation of the Study**

Looking back to the whole thesis, there are two main limitations existing both in theoretical and empirical parts.

Firstly, the thesis is about brand, branding and brand strategy. As the paper mentioned, branding is similar to marketing, which is a complex system in business context. Therefore nobody can express and explain brand or branding from every corner of the concepts, especially for a university student who write a thesis in few months. The study illustrated brand strategy only in branding decisions perspective, thus the results and conclusions are according to being in that way.

Furthermore, the questionnaires are regarded as survey method that sent to fans over the world. However, the Chinese portion among whole questionnaire population took a predominant place. Moreover, the research is conducted in a three-month period, the limited time and recourses limit the depth of the study to some extent. Therefore the final results might be not as convinced as the result distributes to different continents averagely. Also the author's language expression may be another limitation.

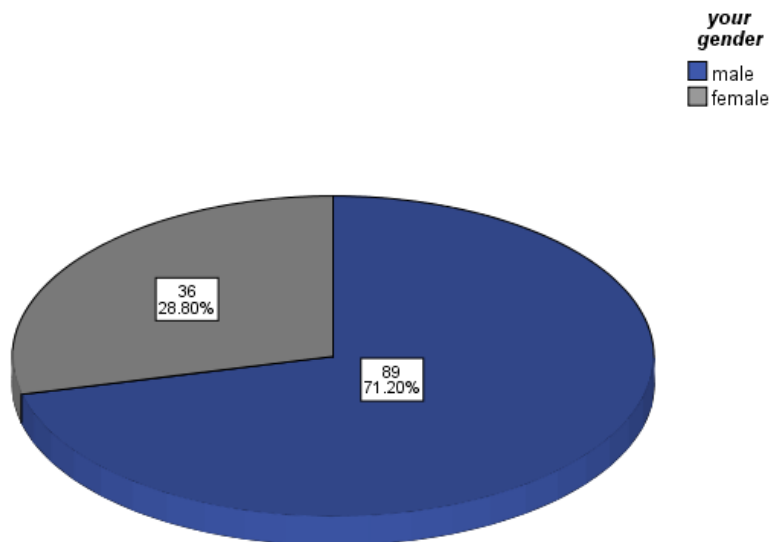
## 5 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The chapter presents the results of the brand strategy questionnaires. At the same time, analysis and recommendations of each section of the findings are shown. The questionnaire collected responses from all over the world. The results are edited by SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The results are presented in three sectors: Demographic and basic information of respondents; respondents' responses to brand meaning; Brand equity, brand identity and brand value in respondents reflects; Brand strategy and branding decisions in the respondents' mind.

### 5.1 Basic information of Respondents

#### Gender distribution

Among all 125 valid respondents, there are 89 male who take 71.2%, 36 of female who from 28.8% of the total number are shown in Graph 1.

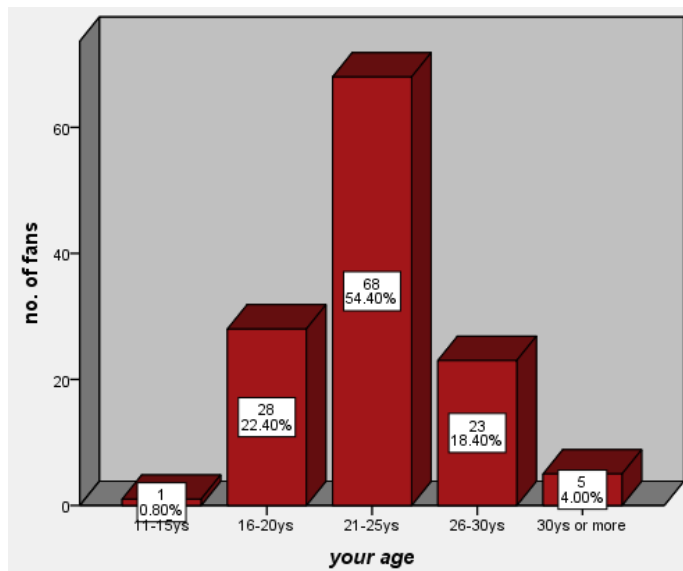


*Graph 1: Respondents by gender*



### Age distribution

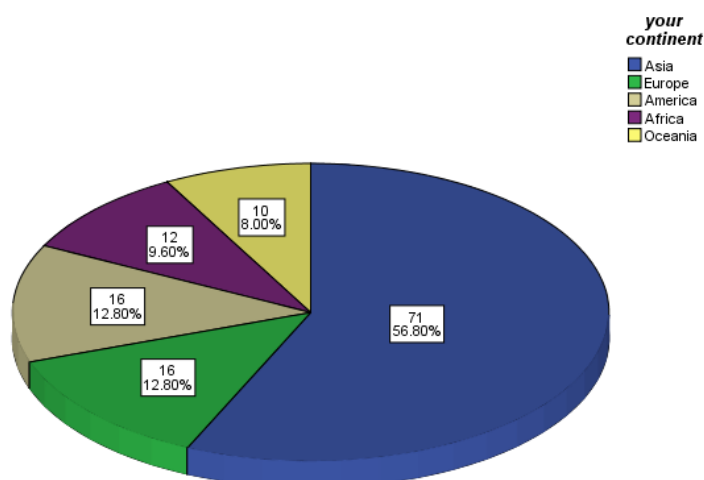
Among all 125 respondents, 68 in total 54.4% are in the age group between 21-25 years old as shown in Graph 2.



Graph 2: Respondents by age

### Continent distribution

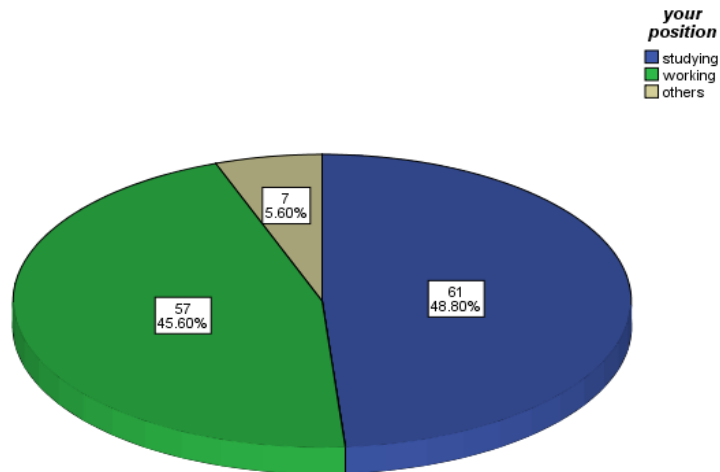
Among all 125 respondents, there are 71 fans from Asia, who is 56.8% as shown in Graph 3.



Graph 3: Respondents by continent

### Position distribution

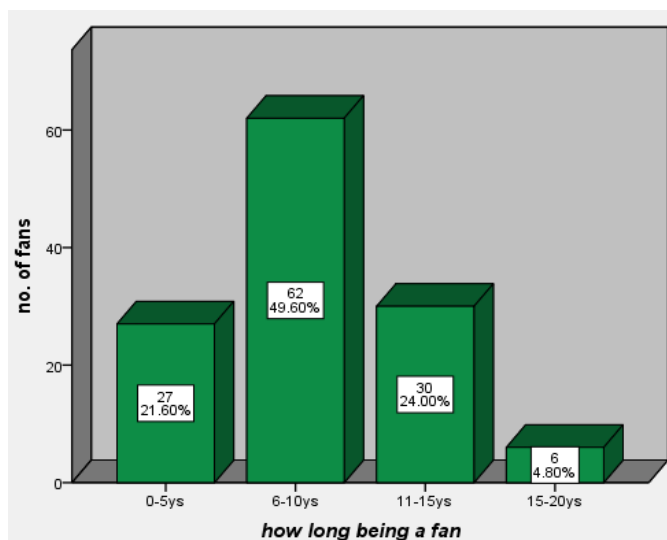
Among all 125 respondents, those who are studying total 61 (48.8%) and those who are working are 57 (45.6%) as shown in Graph 4.



*Graph 4: Respondents by position*

### Time of being a fan

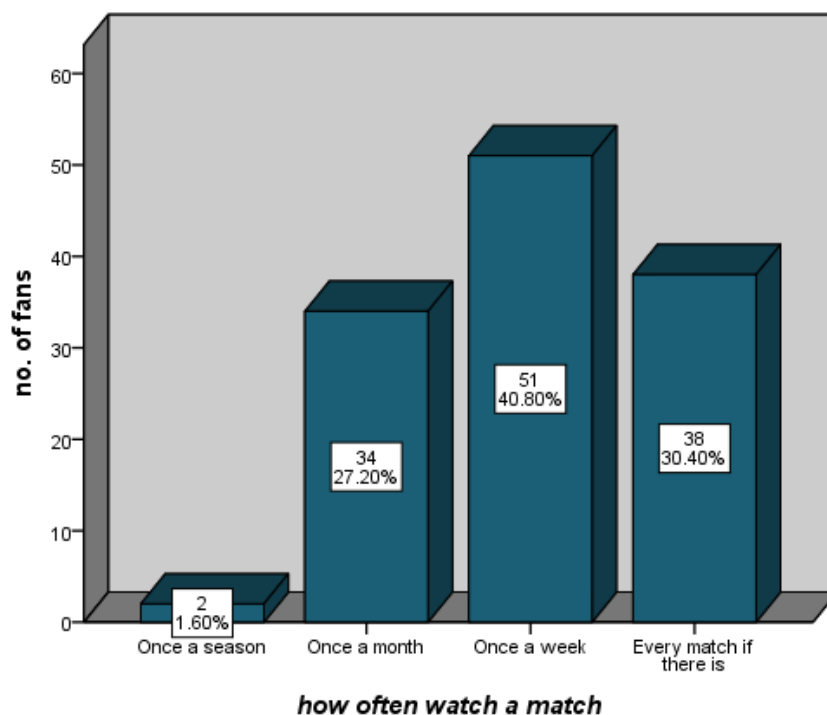
Of all 125 respondents, fans that have supported Manchester United for 6-10 years are 62(49.6%) as shown in Graph 5.



*Graph 5: Fans who have been a fan of MANU*

### Frequency of watching a match

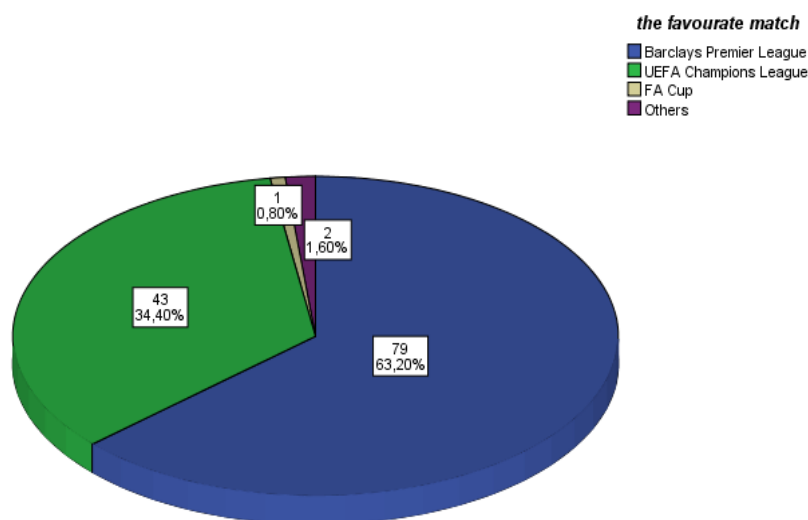
Of all 125 respondents, 51 (40.8%) watch MANU's game once a week, while 38 (30.4%) watch MANU's game every time there is one. As shown in Graph 6, over half of the respondents have time and motion to watch United's match once a week, or even every match.



*Graph 6: Match watching frequency*

### Categories of match fans like most

Among all 125 respondents, there are 79 (66.4%) respondents who are willing to watch Premier League matches the most. In addition, there are 43 fans (34.4%) who want to watch Champions League matches. Two fans chose "Others", one fan chose "FA cup", and nobody chose "League Cup" as shown in Graph 7.



*Graph 7: Categories of match*

**Summary of analysis and recommendations:** Indeed, the domestic league and Europe matches are the two main competitions that Manchester United has focus most. Because of the importance and popularity of these two competitions, there is much business space for any enterprise to explore. Broadcasting, advertising, match ticket, stadium catering services, relevant theme activities and other, such actions can be processed when those two competitions are performing. Fans will be attracted by their team, it brings the Manchester United brand more opportunities and possibilities to launch brand strategies and implement them.

Due to the importance degree of FA Cup and League Cup, there are no more fans who want to take care of these two kinds of matches. In my opinion, MANU should take more force in advertising or other sources of promotion, take these two matches as a tool and media, expend United brand affection and create awareness among the fans and potential fans. Therefore, FA Cup and League Cup bring more possibility for the MANU brand to grow.

## 5.2 United's Brand Meaning

In this section, all 125 fans score the six levels of meaning of United's brand in their mind, scores from 1 to 5. Bar chart give number is shown below. Before the

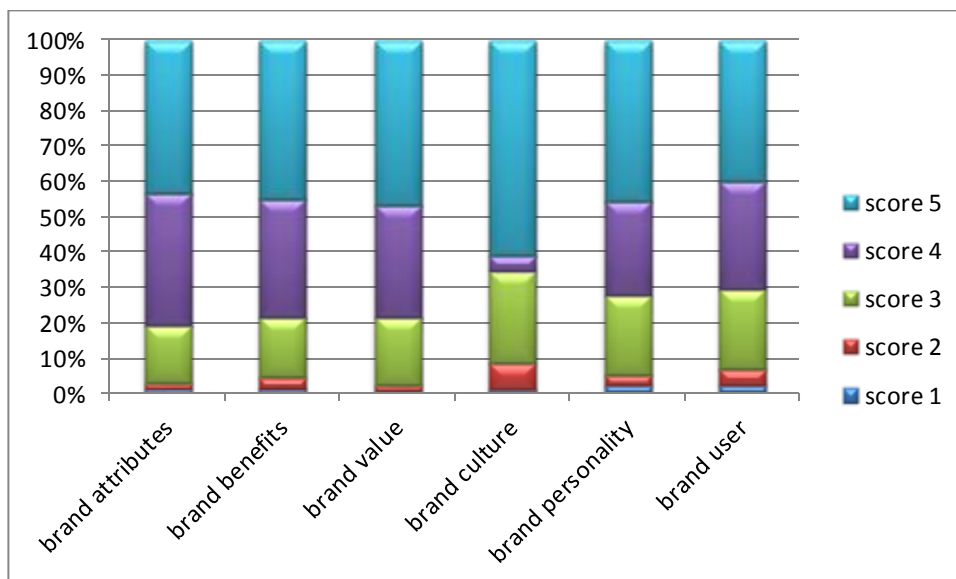
analysis the result, I will explain briefly what the six levels of meaning of United's brand mean.

1. United brand attributes: Manchester United is an ever victorious football club in England, therefore its brand attributes are football, England, champions and glory.
2. United brand benefits: The attributes transfer functional and emotional benefits. The theme merchandises that fans purchase to use express functional benefits. The team's spirit that impact fans and its leading status in England football history that fascinate fans express emotional benefits.
3. United brand value: The brand represents something about the brand producer's value. United's managers send theme products to fans and attract them to come back.
4. United brand culture: United's brand culture from its historical stories and temporary's performances on the field
5. United brand personality: Its personality sometimes can be its culture: We believe! Lift it high! Glory glory ManUnited!
6. United brand user: Fans from all over the world that have no status, no region, and no background limitations.

Next is the analysis of results about brand meaning of United, from a total at 125 valid responses.

	Brand Attributes	Brand Benefits	Brand Value	Brand Culture	Brand Personality	Brand User
(Valid)	125	125	125	125	125	125
(Missing)	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Mean</b>	<b>4.19</b>	<b>4.17</b>	<b>4.22</b>	<b>4.11</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>4.01</b>
<b>Mode</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>

Table 1: Six levels of meaning of United's brand



*Graph 8: Six levels of meaning of United's brand*

As Graph 8 shows, each level gets 5 or 4 point most in a vertical comparison. In a horizontal comparison, only brand culture received “4” more than it received “3” and “5”, but “5” received most among these six factors. The table shows that the mean for each factor is more than 4, and the mode for each is 5.

**Summary of analysis and recommendations:** Based on the graph, the author concludes that United brand meaning from six levels is clear, precise and strong. However, as the figure shows, the mean of “brand user” is 4.01, the lowest. The author recommends that MANU pay more attention to its fans, especially in the customer service aspect, United needs to improve its brand. Although United has its strong attributes and personality, high value, and clear culture, it still has to consider the interaction between a brand and users. Interactions can become lower prices in merchandise sale, more convenient approach in fan base participated activities, more frequent trophy exhibition tours out around the world. I believe that such interactions will enhance and increase its brand users.

### **5.3 United's Brand Equity, Brand Identity, and Brand Value**

In this section, all 125 fans gave 7 answers to questions on brand equity, brand identity, and brand value. Among these, 4 questions based on brand equity were

answered in 4 aspects: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, and brand loyalty.

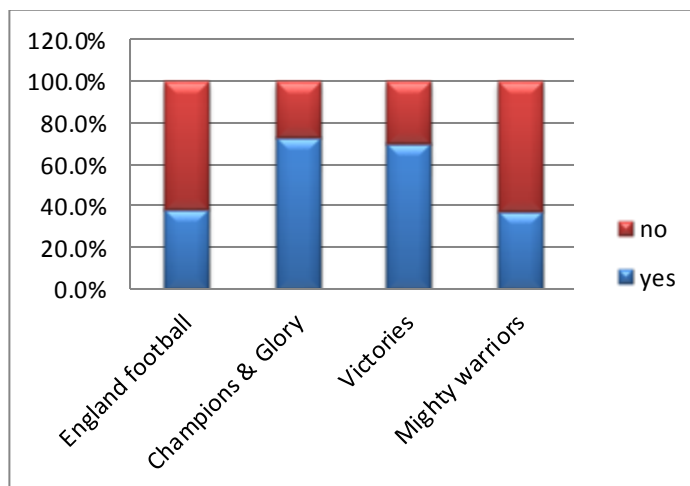
### 5.3.1 Brand Equity on Fans' Perspectives

#### Brand awareness of United

This question provides 4 answers; each fan can choose one or more. In the SPSS setting, if one chose YES, the data is 1; on the other hand, if the choice is NO, the data is 2. From the statistics Table 2 and graph below, the mode of “champions & glory” and “victories” is 1, that of other two is 2. It means that champions and victories are the main brand awareness of United in the fans' minds.

	England football	Champions & Glory	Victories	Mighty warriors
(Valid)	125	125	125	125
(Missing)	0	0	0	0
<b>Mode</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

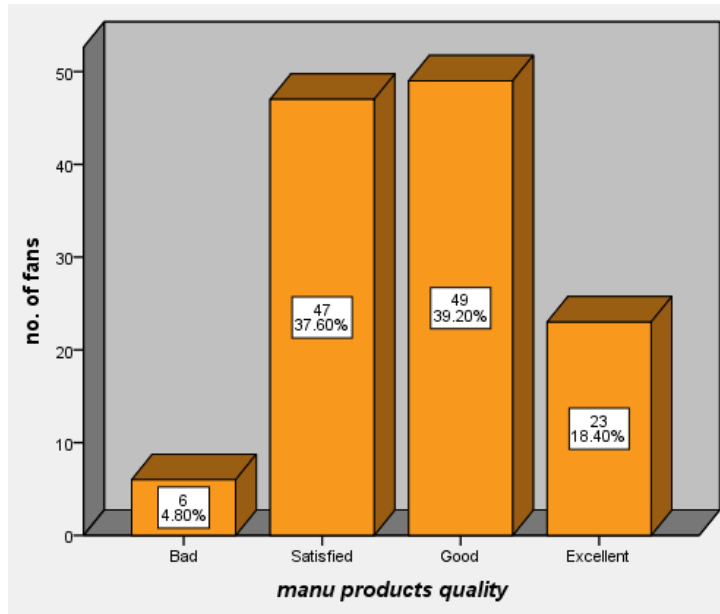
*Table 2: MANU supposed to mean in fans' mind*



*Graph 9: MANU supposed to mean in fans' mind*

### Perceived quality of United

The bar graph below shows the fans' evaluation of the quality of MANU merchandises. In all 125 valid respondents, nobody chose “terrible”, 47 respondents (37.6%) thought its quality is satisfactory, 49 (39.2%) as shown in Graph 10 thought its quality is good, and 23 (18.4%) thought it is excellent.



*Graph 10: MANU products quality in fans' mind*

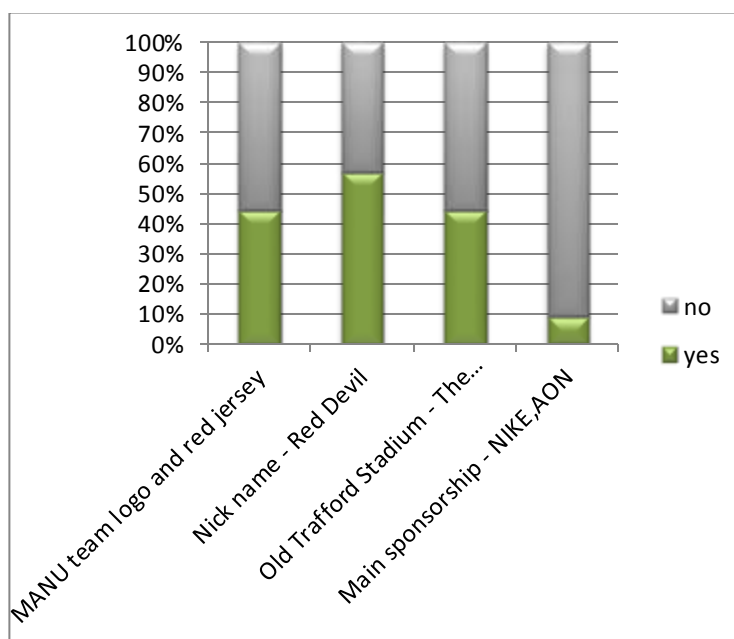
### Brand Associations of United

This question provides 4 answers; each fan can choose one or more. In the SPSS setting, if one chose YES, the data is 1; on the other hand, if the choice is NO, the data is 2. From the statistics table and figure below, the mode of “Nick name – Red Devil” and “Old Trafford stadium – The Theater of Dreams” is 1, the other two are 2. It means that United's nick name and its home stadium are the main brand awareness of United in the fans' minds. This is shown in Graph 11.



	MANU team logo and red jersey	Nick name – Red Devil	Old Trafford stadium – The Theater of Dreams	Main sponsorships – NIKE, AON
(Valid)	125	125	125	125
(Missing)	0	0	0	0
<b>Mode</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

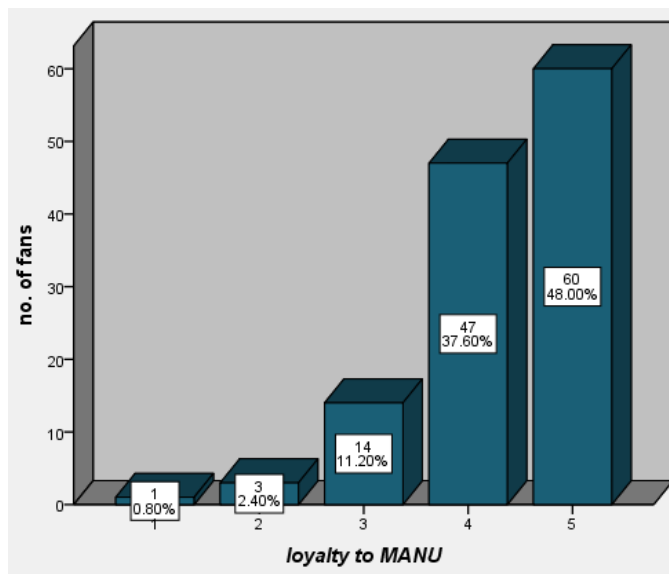
*Table 3: The most memorable elements of MANU in fans' mind*



*Graph 11: The most memorable elements of MANU in fans' mind*

### Brand loyalty of United

The bar graph below shows the fans' loyalty to the United brand. Of all 125 valid respondents, 47(37.6%) presented their loyalty as reaching 4<sup>th</sup> degree, 60 (48%) stated that their loyalty is 5<sup>th</sup> degree. This is shown in Graph 12.



*Graph 12: Fan's loyalty to United's brand*

**Summary of analysis and recommendations:** As the study has discussed before, brand equity consists of brand assets and liabilities, to add value provide to company or customers. In fan's views, Manchester United FC stands for champions, glory and victories since it has got 20 league titles and 3 champions' league titles. Therefore, when customers mention Manchester United, its brand brings this awareness to the end customers. For strengthening its brand awareness, the recommendation is to promote the figure of club's stars, as personal idolism creates more market effect that is attached to the brand.

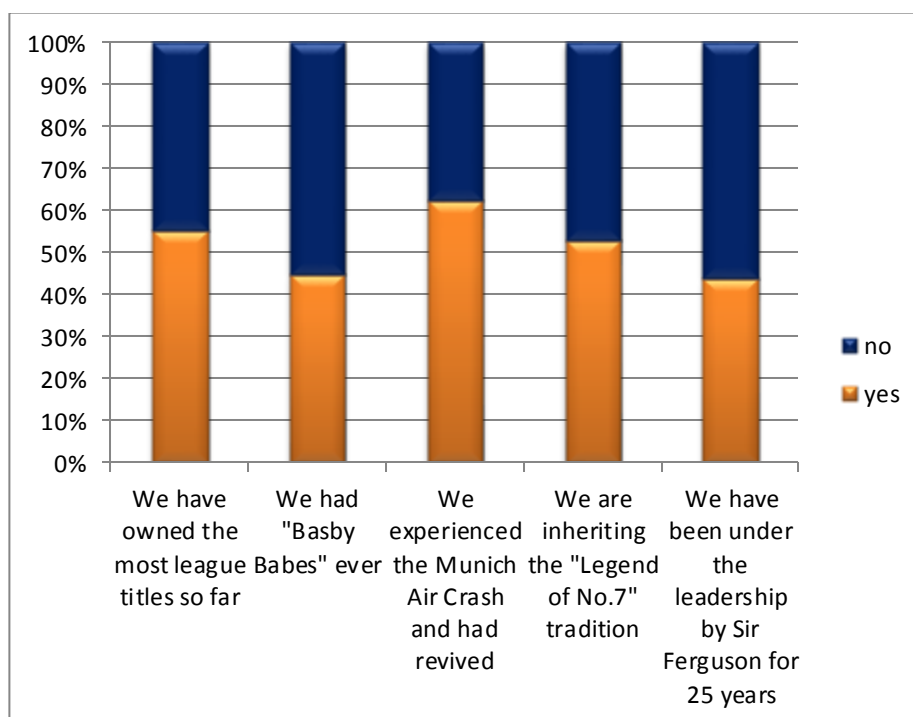
"Red Devil" is an invincible item and it is unique for Manchester United all the time. Old Trafford stadium has witnessed so many victorious battles of Manchester United against competitors at home. The author concludes that such these two associations (nick name and stadium) have successfully been brand association in the fans' and customers' minds, and they are definitely the symbols of the club and the brand. However, its team logo, identified in and jersey and the main sponsor are not as strong associations as its name and stadium. Therefore the author recommends that United's brand team should design more symbolic and memorable kits for the team while still signing contracts with NIKE or AON in the long term.

### 5.3.2 Brand Identity on Fans' Perspectives

This question provides 4 answers; each fan can choose one or more. In the SPSS setting, if one chose YES, the data is 1; on the other hand, if the choice is NO, the data is 2. From the statistics table and figure below, the mode of “The most league titles”, “Munich Air Crash” and “Legend of No.7” is 1; that of other two is 2. It means that United’s trophies, air tragedy story, and club stars are the main brand identity of United in fans’ mind.

	The most league titles	"Busby Babes"	Munich Air Crash	"Legend of No.7"	Ferguson's 25ys leadership
(Valid)	125	125	125	125	125
(Missing)	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Mode</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

Table 4: Reason(s) that make(s) MANU unique in fan's mind



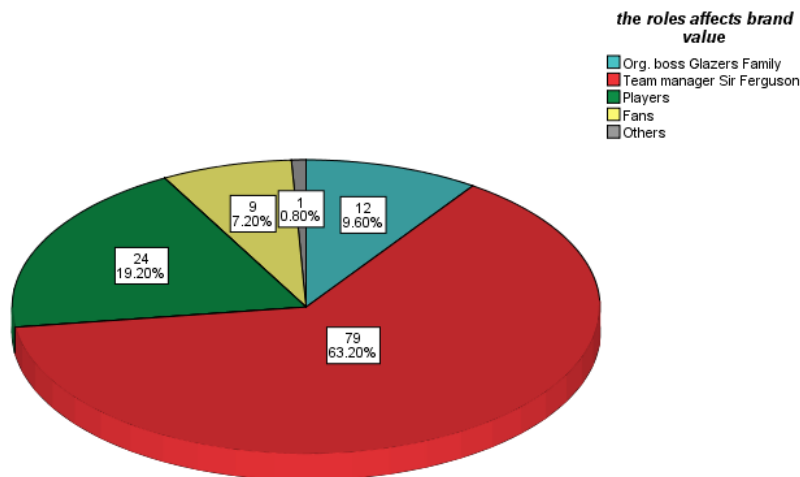
Graph 13: Reason(s) that make(s) MANU unique in fan's mind

**Summary of analysis:** 1) It has been mentioned that Manchester United is the most successful football club in England because of numbers of champions. “Champions” has brought strong brand identity to customers, since it delivers distinct and unique characteristics in brand marketing. 2) Munich Air Crash was definitely a tragedy in human history, not only for the football club. When people around the world cherish the memory of dead talents every February, the theme exhibitions hold in Old Trafford and the live ceremony broadcasted to the world make fans recall the scene in 1958; at the moment, United let people remember its brand in such a special way. 3) United’s talents are famous in the world, whatever Best, Cantona, Beckham, or C. Ronaldo, these stars who were No.7 in the club’s history lifted a storm of idolism to their fans. It is no doubt that the idolism brings positive effect to United’s branding and promotion, one example is brand “CR7” that is owned by C.Ronaldo.

**Summary of recommendations:** “Basby Babes” stands for an outstanding young generation that was formed in 1992. Today, no matter whether players such as Beckham, Scholes and Giggs, I commentator such as Neville, or a team coach such as Butt, all of these men has successful but different careers in their lives. The author supposes that these men who were from United can enrich their personal associations, for example, publish an autobiography, and participate in commercials and social parties. Such associations also help United’s brand identity to be more memorable and unique. Moreover, as team manager, Sir Alex Ferguson has controlled the team for 25 years. He himself is one excellent brand identity of Manchester United.

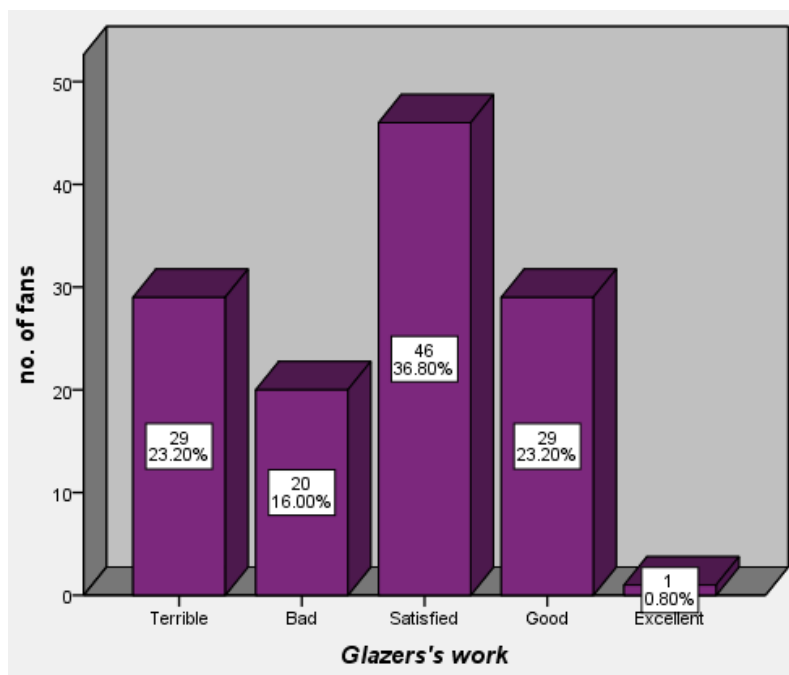
### **5.3.3 Brand Value on Fans’ Perspectives**

Of all 125 respondents, 79 fans (63.2%) thought Sir Ferguson is the role that affects the brand value most. Besides, 24 respondents (19.2%) chose the players, and 12 (9.6%) chose the owner of United – Glazers Family.



*Graph 14: The roles affect United's brand value in fans' mind*

Graph 15 below shows how fans evaluate Glazer's work. Of all 125 valid respondents, 46 (36.8%) presented satisfied evaluation; 29 (23.2%) though Glazer's work was either terrible and good.



*Graph 15: Evaluation of Glazer's work in fans' mind*

**Summary of analysis and recommendations:** A company's brand value depends on how well its controllers and managers have done in the financial way. Although within the recent 4 years, Manchester United has not bought excellent players in the transfer market, the team's performances were just fair on the field; Sir Ferguson managed the players with his own style and brought United several champions. Thus from a fan's perspective, the team coach affects the team and the team's brand most. However, in the business world, no matter what attitude the fans hold against the team boss, Glazer does make United brand the 6<sup>th</sup> biggest brand in the world, and its brand value has grown from £197m in 2005, to £412m in 2011.

#### **5.4 United's Brand Strategy in Branding-Decisions Way**

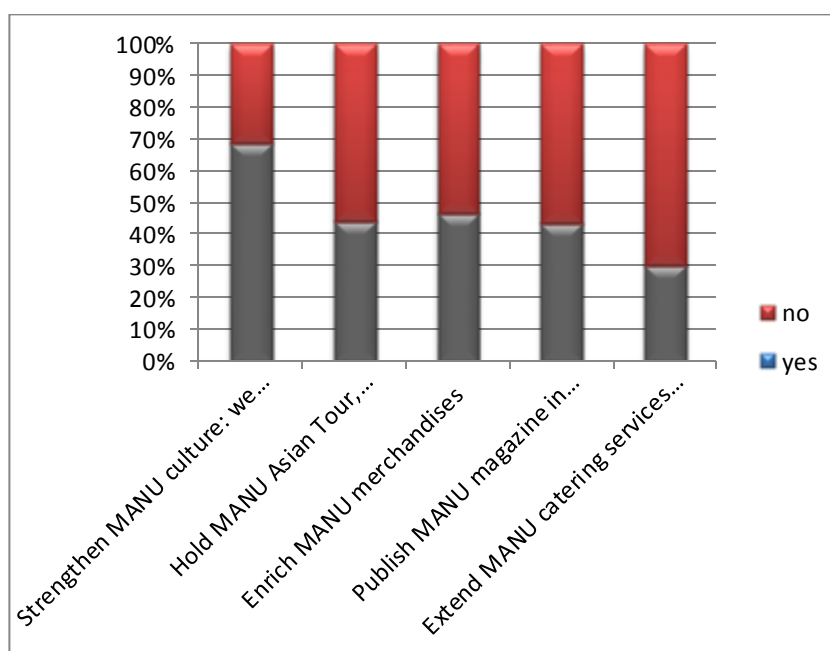
In the branding decisions section, all 125 respondents gave 10 answers for questions that from a branding decision, a brand-sponsor decision, a brand-name decision, a brand-strategy decision, and a brand-repositioning decision. Among these, 5 sub-questions according to brand-strategy decision were answered in 5 aspects: line extensions, brand-extensions, multibrands, new brands, and cobrands.

##### **5.4.1 Branding Decision Implementations**

This question provides 5 answers; each fan can choose one or more. In the SPSS setting, if one chose YES, the data is 1; on the other hand, if the choice is NO, the data is 2. From the statistics in table and figure below, only the mode of "Strengthen MANU culture" is 1, that means most of fans think United's brand culture needs to improve; on the contrast, the mode of other 4 alternatives is 2, that means they are not the points Manchester United should focus on in the fans' perspectives.

	Strengthen MANU culture	Hold MANU Tour	Enrich MANU merchandises	Publish MANU magazine in multi- languages	Extend MANU catering services in the world
(Valid)	125	125	125	125	125
(Missing)	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Mode</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

*Table 5: The way(s) MANU need to focus in*



*Graph 16: The way(s) MANU need to focus in*

**Summary of analysis and recommendations:** Manchester United is a global fan-orientated football brand; cultural issues inspire fans or customers from all over the world to recognize the brand. “We believe” became a strong slogan and identity of United’s brand. However, when the brander plans to make a branding decision, only a cultural issue is not enough to cover the branding processes. The author listed other 4 alternatives that would improve United’s branding decision. 1) Today, Manchester United averagely holds one match tour to America, Asia, or Europe during every summer holiday. These tours create commercial benefits

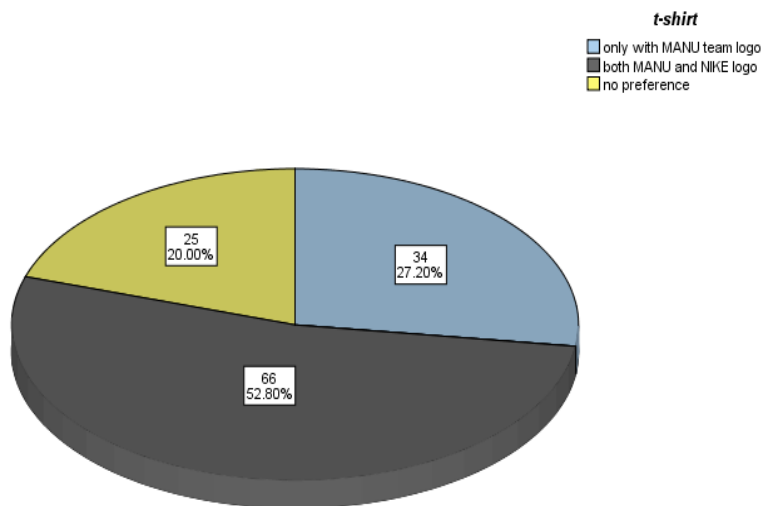
both for the club and the local economy, but more frequent tours make fans' awareness of their passion consistently. 2) Product is the main item, sometimes it represents all to a brand. So far, the merchandises of MANU only focus on the sport field, but they don't expend to other fields. The author recommends that United's products should enlarge to business or entertainment positions. 3) Publication is a useful media tool to deliver a brand's image. MANU's theme magazines are so far published only in English, French, Traditional Chinese or other main used languages in the world. Such Multilanguage publications are possible for fans from every corner of the world to step closer Manchester United, therefore Multilanguage publication is MANU focus in the future. 4) Catering service adds potential value to a brand; such service keep people remember theirs the football team. However, as personal experiences from the author, only England, India, US, Taipei and Hong Kong have United's theme restaurants. Therefore there is a need to expend United's theme restaurants and bars around the world, as operating catering business only in capital cities in certain countries is not enough.

#### **5.4.2 Brand-Sponsor Decision Implementations**

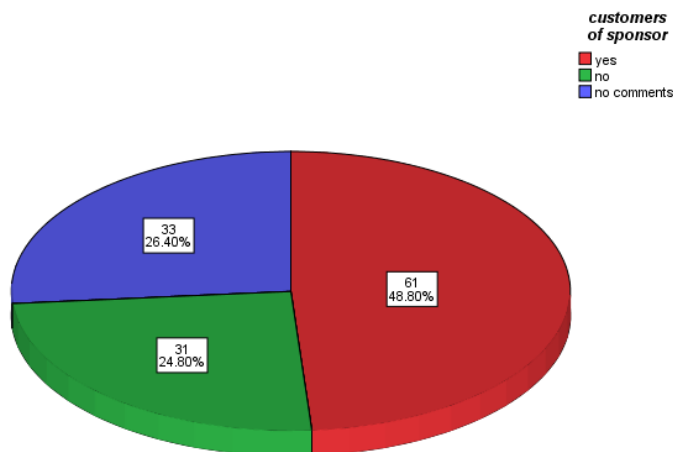
Of all 125 valid respondents for Q22, 66 fans (52.8%) thought they want to buy United's t-shirt with both MANU and NIKE logo, 34 fans (27.2%) prefer United's t-shirt only with the team logo.

Of all 125 valid respondents for Q23, 61 fans (48.8%) fans thought they will be a customer of NIKI, AON, DHL or other sponsors of MANU, 31 fans (24.8%) will not be, and 33 fans (26.4%) have no comments as shown in Graph 17.





*Graph 17: Fans' choices of United's products*



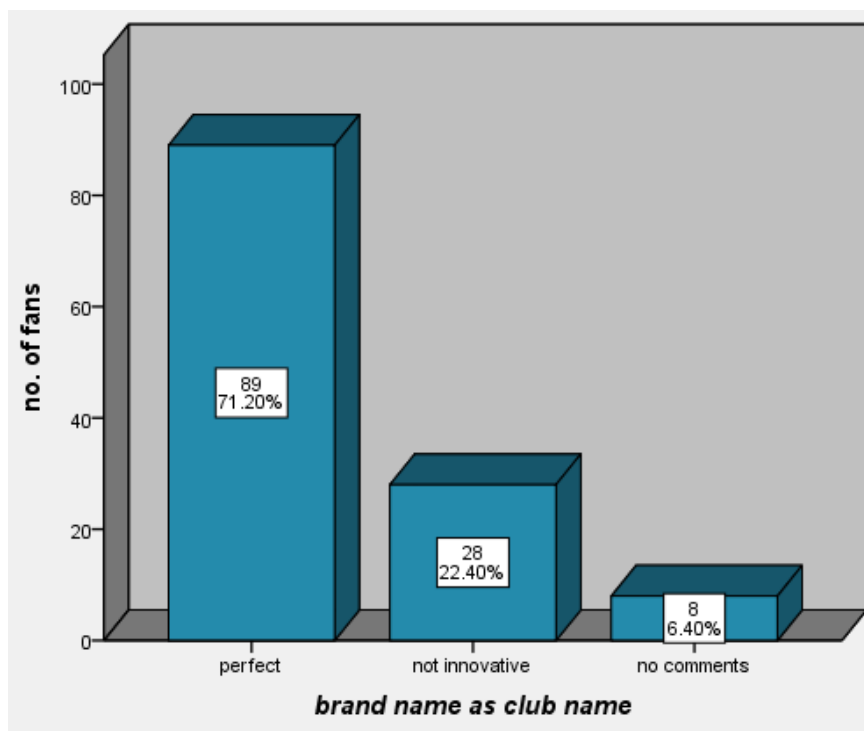
*Graph 18: Being a customer of United's sponsors in fans' mind*

There are two alternatives: The previous theory has introduced three kinds of brand options that respect brand sponsorship: manufacturer brand, distributor brand, and licensed brand. In this question, “product only with team logo” stands for manufacturer brand, as it is produced by internal manufactures; “product with combined logos” stands for distributor brand since MANU acts as a reseller to sell NIKE sport costumes.

**Summary of analysis and recommendations:** Manchester United has begun a partnership with NIKE in 2002, thus all its costumes should add NIKE logo. Therefore, in a brand-sponsor decision sense, MANU is a manufacture brand (as the previous theory mentioned). Because of such firmly and strong sponsorship, fans of United are used to consume merchandises that are produced by NIKE. Therefore, the figure above showed that more than half of the respondents are willing to purchase “NIKE+MANU” products. However, is it possible for Manchester United to launch its own manufacturer brand? Definitely yes! A good example is United’s competitor in premier league – “Arsenal”. Arsenal’s main costume sponsor is the same as United’s, but Arsenal established its own manufacturer brand. Besides the sport field, Arsenal’s team logo is the only brand logo that appears on leisure and entertainment costumes. The case of Arsenal is successful, it presents United that a manufacturer brand are possible separate from its existing distributor brand.

#### **5.4.3 Brand-Name Decision Implementations**

Graph 19 below shows the fans’ evaluation of United’s brand name as its club’s name. Of all 125 valid respondents, 89 (71.2%) thought it is perfect to use the club name because fans can directly recognize what the brand is; 28 (22.4%) supposed it is not innovative, the brand name should be “Red Devil” or something else.



*Graph 19: United's brand name as the club's name*

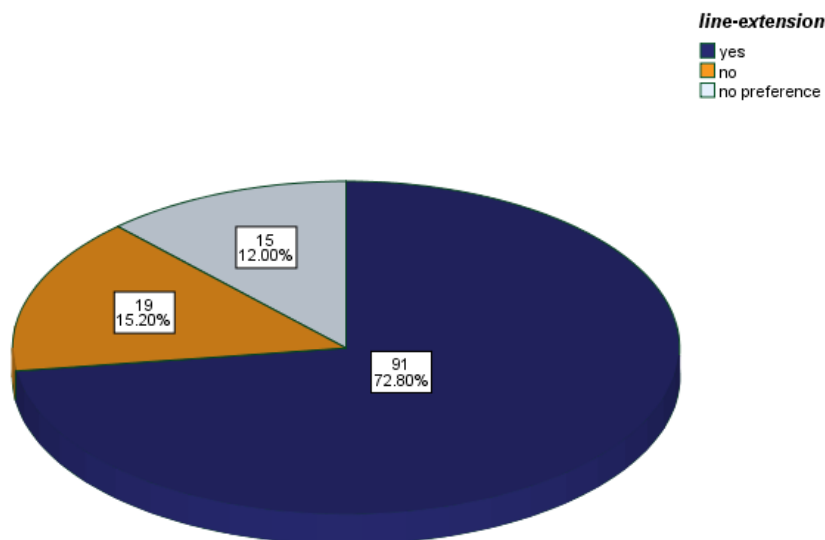
**Summary of analysis and recommendations:** In football brand marketing, previous cases showed that almost all the clubs launched their brand name as the club's original name. Such a name gives fans and customers a direct image of what the brand or product is about. However, as a strong and outstanding football club, using other items to be a brand name, or even a sub-brand name, is practical to enlarging brand awareness and brand associations in the fans' mind. "Red Devil" is unique for Manchester United; "Newton Health", which was the former club name, adds historical features to Manchester United; "Class of 92", which witnessed a successful young generation of player in United's training system, put additional personal impacts on Manchester United. These items are all suitable to being a brand name or sub-brand name of United's products.

#### **5.4.4 Brand-Strategy Decision Implementations**

##### Line-extension and brand-extension

Graph 20 below concerning line-extensions indicates the fans' opinions on whether they can buy United's products for different ages and genders. Of all 125 valid

respondents, 91 respondents (72.8%) said they can find one product with different ages and genders when purchase United's merchandises; 19 respondents (15.2%) said they would not buy United's products since there are few the family can use; 15 fans (12%) gave no preference.

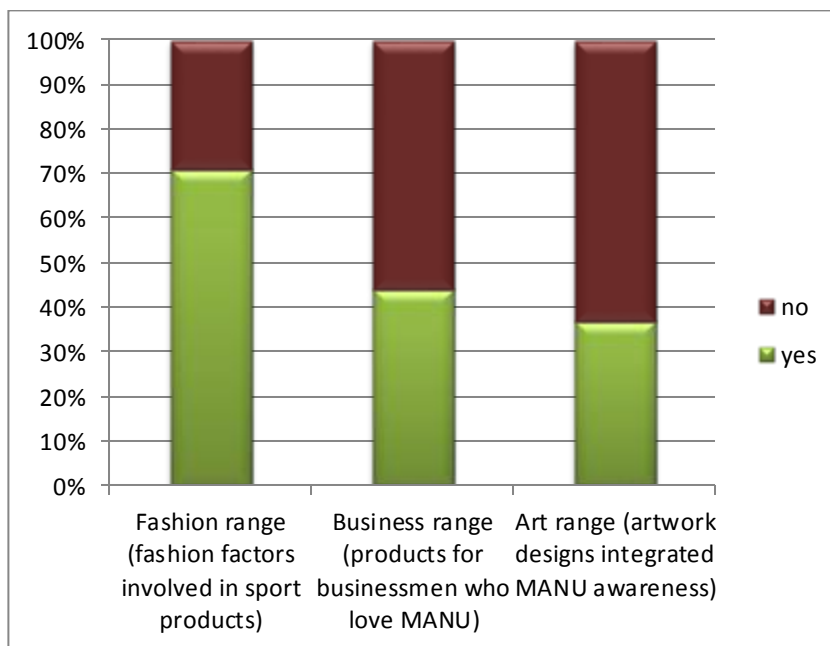


*Graph 20: Line-extensions of United's products in fans' mind*

The table concerning brand-extensions below provides 5 answers for the question; each fan can choose one or more. In the SPSS setting, if one chose YES, the data is 1; on the other hand, if the choice is NO, the data is 2. From the statistics table and figure below, only the mode of "fashion range" is 1, that means most of fans thought United's merchandises should extend into fashion range; and the mode of "business range" and "art range" is 2, that means not some many fans agreed United's merchandises should be extended into these two ranges.

	Fashion rgage	Business range	Art ranges
(Valid)	125	125	125
(Missing)	0	0	0
<b>Mode</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

*Table 6: Brand-extensions of United's products in fan's mind*



*Graph 21: Brand-extensions of United's products in fan's mind*

**Summary of analysis and recommendations:** Manchester United markets theme products that generally satisfy the wants of fans of different ages and genders distribution as the pie graph showed. However, the line-extension strategy is needed to improve family-orientated aspects. Actually, no matter whether in Europe or in other places in the world, football fans always keep the consistent tradition that old generation influences deeply the young's football preferences, what means if that one's father supports Manchester United, he or she possible supports Manchester United from childhood. Thus, based on fan's family-oriented tradition, United should launch and promote more family used merchandises that can fit family fans' love.

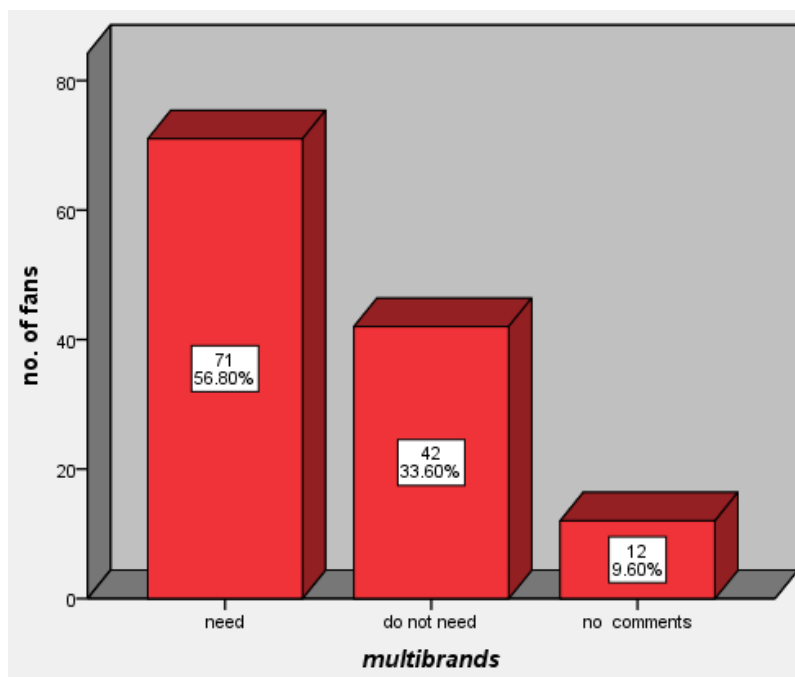
A football match is used for watching and enjoying, and a football star is used for following and pursuing. Thus, to some extent, a sport such as football has certain internal relationship with fashion because they can be considered in the area of entertainment. That is why most respondents supposed to concern United's products in the fashion range. However, in my own view, if one company hopes its customers will keep communications with itself more frequently and wishes its products to exist in the marketplace longer, the company should implement brand

extension strategy all the time. There is no doubt that there are businessmen and artists who loves football and Manchester United. The multiple social background of customers creates bigger possibility for United to extend its brand in other ranges, in order to fulfill users' wants.

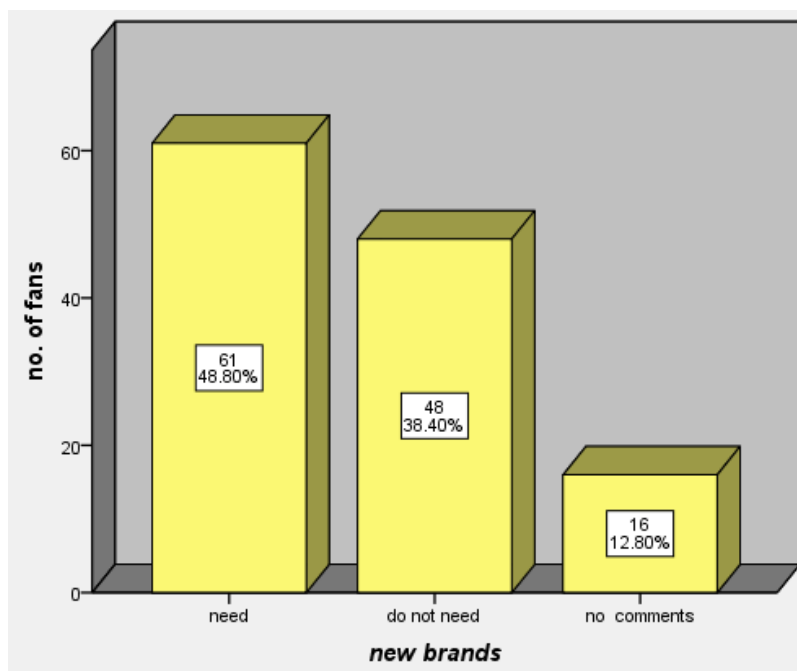
#### Multibrands, new brands, and cobrands

The Graph 22 below indicates the fans' opinions on whether Manchester United need to establish multibrands. Of all 125 valid respondents, 71 fans (56.8%) thought it needs; 42 fans (33.6%) supposed it does not need to.

The Graph 23 below indicates the fans' opinions on whether Manchester United needs to create new brands. Of all 125 valid respondents, 61 fans (48.8%) thought it needs; 48 fans (38.4%) supposed it does not need to.



*Graph 22: Multibrands of United in fans' mind*

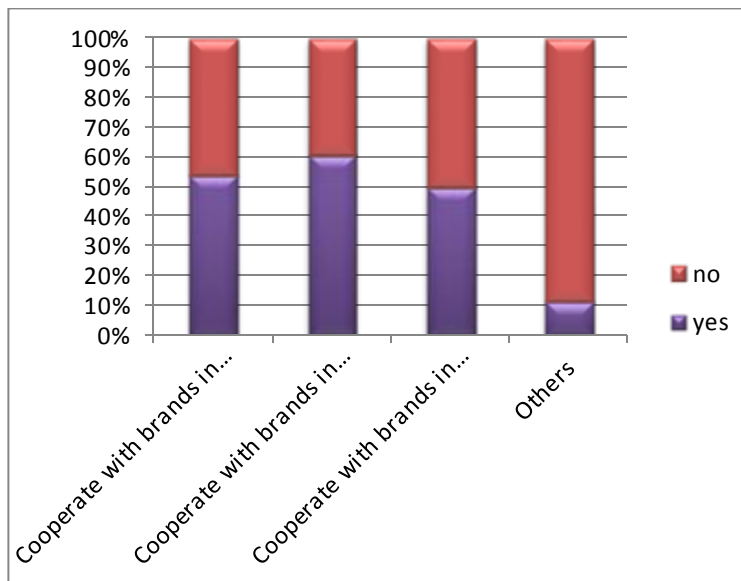


*Graph 23: New brands of United in fans' min*

Table 7 concerning cobrands below provides 3 answers for the question; each fan can choose one or more. In the SPSS setting, if one chose YES, the data is 1; on the other hand, if the choice is NO, the data is 2. From the statistics table and graph below, only the mode of “co. with catering brand” is 1, that means most of fans prefer United cooperate with other catering brand; the mode of “cooperate with technology brand” and “cooperate with entertainment brand” is 2, that means not some of fans are not interested in such kinds of cooperating brands. In addition, information in bar graph around 10% of respondents have no opinion.

	Co. with catering brand eg: 'MANU & McD'	Co. with technology brand eg: 'MANU & DELL'	Co. with entertainment brand eg: 'MANU & DISNEY'
(Valid)	125	125	125
(Missing)	0	0	0
<b>Mode</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

*Table 7: Cobrands of United in fan's mind*



*Graph 24: Cobrands of United in fan's mind*

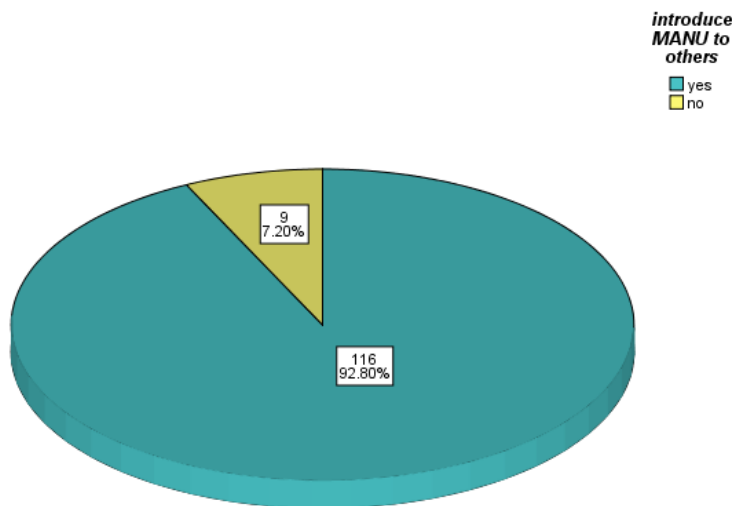
**Summary of analysis and recommendations:** Multibrands means additional brands that are introduced in the same product category. So far, Manchester United has not established any multibrands. From respondents' answers, they wish Manchester United will some days have its multibrands. I do not recommend having multibrands, since MANU is a specialized football brand; multiple brands that introduced products in the same category must soften and weaken the core MANU brand image in fans' mind. Depressively, fans will be confused to concern a core brand image of United in the future. When company launches products in new categories, new brand names are used. The precondition is none of its existing brand names are suitable for new products. From the second bar graph numbers showed above, more respondents agreed to have new United's brands. However, considering MANU's current branding situation that MANU is not as strong as YAMAHA, who manufactures cars and pianos, although new brands highlight new features of MANU's products, they cannot reveal MANU's spirit and will fail in marketplaces. Thus the author does not agree to implement new brands strategy. Manchester United had successful cobranding experiences, and most of them specialized in technology field. From respondents' choices, fans prefer MANU to cooperate with catering brands, such as McDonald. Actually cooperating with catering brands for United will increase its catering service quality and



income of theme restaurants, cafes and bars. Partnership with famous catering brand will promote Manchester United into a newly field, so as to being connect with entertainment brands.

#### 5.4.5 Brand-Repositioning Decision Implementations

The pie graph numbers indicates the portion whether the fans will introduce United to their friends and relatives who are not the fans. Of all 125 valid respondents, 116 respondents (92.8%) said they will introduce MANU to their families and friends; 9 respondents (7.2%) said they will not.



*Graph 25: Brand repositioning in fans' mind*

**Summary of analysis and recommendations:** As Graph 25 shows, if more and more non-fans are concerning Manchester United, there will a clear and bright prospect when United's brand is growing and developing in marketplaces. This is due to the fact that MANU's target customers are becoming more firm and the fan base is stronger. Therefore, brand-repositioning decision will not be a strategy to be used at least in short period.

## 6 CONCLUSION

This is the final chapter of the whole dissertation. In the beginning of the chapter, the conclusion according to research and empirical findings are presented. At the end of the final chapter, managerial implications and recommendations on further research are developed.

### 6.1 Conclusion of Empirical Findings

Chapter 5 was the empirical study of the thesis. It mainly presented data from previous questionnaires and analyzed the data. The Introduction of the thesis mentioned that the aim of the research is to improve MANU's brand strategy according to fans' perceptions. Thus, the conclusion helps to investigate the factors that are possible to improve MAUN's brand strategy. All the empirical findings are according to theory framework: six levels of meaning of MANU, three terminologies concerning MANU, and five branding decisions as brand strategies of MANU.

United's brand meaning from six levels is generally strong. However, the level of "brand user" is the weakest level, because MANU took further towards fans, especially in the customer service aspect. Therefore, Manchester United has to have sight of its fans and customers all the time, build and strengthen the relationship between the brand and its users.

Manchester United FC stands for champions and victories; its brand brings this awareness to the end customers. "Red Devil" is an invincible item and it is a unique sign for United forever. Old Trafford stadium has witnessed historical victories and United's performances seem like dreamful operas in such wonderful theater. Most of the respondents think that sponsorship is not as clear as the other associations of United. Therefore, when United deepens its brand image on its nick name and home stadium, it also need to keep strong partnership with its main sponsors, because such partners are not only provide financial support, but also impact United's brand into its fans' hearts.

“Basby Babes” stands for a great generation in United’s history. These men who were from United can enrich their personal associations by, for example publishing autobiography. The things Basby Babes did will make United more unique, and help United to create personal brand strategy. Manchester United experienced a tragic air disaster ever. Such a shock did not put United down but put United revived. United should promote its unique historical affairs and connect such affairs to its brand. As team manager, Sir Alex Ferguson has controlled the team for 25 years. He himself is one excellent brand identities of Manchester United.

The team coach Sir Ferguson manages his player with his outstanding style, thus he brought United several champions. From a fan’s perspective, Ferguson affected the team and its brand most. Glazer made United’s brand being the 6<sup>th</sup> biggest brand in the world, and its brand value has grown from £197m in 2005, to £412m in 2011. Thus from a managerial perspective, Glazer contribute United’s brand most.

Most of the respondents agree to strengthen MANU’s culture: We believe. A strong culture created a strong awareness among the fanbase, and such culture helps to develop a better global fan-oriented football brand. Beside the above ways to make MANU a global fan-based brand, it should publish Multilanguage’s magazines in the range of the world, and improve and enrich its theme catering service, so that United can make fans to remember United all the time or to recall United’s brand frequently.

Manchester United has been a major and successful distributor brand since it has a partnership with NIKE, but it possibly can be a manufacturer brand too, if it borrows ideas from Arsenal.

United’s product line-extension covers all theme products with different ages and genders. In addition, its brand-extension revealed that fans’ are more willing to purchase theme merchandises that integrate fashionable and business elements. If the ideas come into action in the future, stylists and businessmen can experience United’s products in their own preferences. Manchester United has not established any multibrands and new brands, but from respondents’ views, it has the potential

competence. Moreover, there are more possibilities to establish cobrands not only in already existing technology field, but in the catering and entertainment field.

Last but not least, as a specialized football brand, its end users are fans. Since United's target customers are becoming more firm and the fan base is stronger, brand-repositioning decision is not suitable to be implanted in the contemporary business context.

## **6.2 Managerial Implication**

Generally this dissertation researches on football brand and brand strategy; however, it illustrates the common concept of "Brand Strategy" in a new way – 5 Branding Decisions. The result of empirical findings gave the writer a number of implications on how Manchester United should improve its brand strategy, and certainly, in branding decisions approach.

Because brand equity, brand identity and brand value seem like the soul of a brand, previous researches and academic works concerning brand management and brand strategy, many of those publications focus purely on "Long-term Brand Equity Enhancement", "Brand Identity Development", or "Brand value promotion". However, this undergraduate dissertation takes about brand strategy in a new way, and provides a new horizon to understanding brand and brand strategy.

The author of this study is a fan of Manchester United, the author wishes that all the United's fans can know Manchester United not only for the field performances, but also its brand development in the business field.

## **6.3 Recommendations for Further Research**

Both from common academic publications and United practical and updated factors, this dissertation constructed related information to elaborate brand strategy for a English football club, Manchester United.

During the empirical procedure, the small size of the final sample, the low rate of response, and the undispersed respondents distribution (56.8% of fans are from

Asia) lead the results that cannot be generalized for all the matters. Thus, there should be a balanced sample distribution in dealing with affairs of a global fan-based brand.

In addition, the ways and methods for research implementation need to be improved in the future. The improved methods for research can be combining qualitative research and quantitative research for the case company; the data collection can be from questionnaires and personal interviews.

At last but not least, the study did presented three brand variables and five branding decisions in two separate chapters of the theoretical framework. Actually each variable has inner relationship between each branding decisions, which means that whatever brand equity, brand identity or brand value can be analyzed in branding decision way. Thus the writer here proposes such remixed analysis will be carried out dually in future research.

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## **APPENDIX 1: Structured Questionnaire for Manchester United Fans**

**Dear my lovely MANU fans, this is a questionnaire of my Bachelor dissertation concerning Manchester United Brand Strategies Implementation. I honestly invite you to participate in such research project. Through your participation I hope to explore how Manchester United can improve its branding strategies. The questionnaire consists of four parts: Your basic information; Six levels of meaning of MANU brand; Brand equity, brand value and brand identity of MANU brand; and MANU Brand Strategies Based on Branding Decisions. It will approximately take you 10 minutes to complete it. Thank you for your participant!**

### **BASIC INFORMATION**

1. Please indicate your gender

Male      Female

2. Please indicate your age

11-15   16-20   21-25   26-30   30 or more

3. Please indicate the continent you are from

Asia   Europe   America   Africa   Oceania

4. Please indicate your position

Studying   Working   Others

5. How long have you been a fan of Manchester United?

0-5years   6-10years   11-15years   15-20years   21years or more

6. How often do you watch a MANU match?

Once a season

Once a month

Once a week

Every match if there is

7. Which categories of match is your favourite?

Barclays Premier League

UEFA Champions League

FA Cup

League Cup

Others

**SIX LEVELS OF MEANING OF MANU BRAND**

8. In what extent MANU delivers its brand attributes, scoring from 1-5?

1 2 3 4 5

9. In what extent MANU delivers its brand benefits, scoring from 1-5?

1 2 3 4 5

10. In what extent MANU delivers its brand value, scoring from 1-5?

1 2 3 4 5

11. In what extent MANU delivers its brand culture, scoring from 1-5?

1 2 3 4 5

12. In what extent MANU delivers its brand personality, scoring from 1-5?

1 2 3 4 5

13. In what extent MANU delivers its brand user, scoring from 1-5?

1 2 3 4 5

## **BRAND EQUITY, VALUE, AND IDENTITY OF MANU BRAND**

### **Brand Equity**

14. What does MANU supposed to mean in your mind?

England football

Champions & Glory

Victories

Mighty warriors

15. When you purchase MANU theme products (eg. clothes, equipment, souvenirs), how do you feel its quality?

Terrible Bad Satisfied Good Excellent

16. Which element concerning MANU do you remember most?

MANU team logo and red jersey

Nick name – Red Devil

Old Trafford stadium – The Theater of Dreams

Main Sponsorships – NIKE, AON

17. How is the degree of you loyalty towards MANU brand, scoring from 1 to 5?

1 2 3 4 5

### **Brand Identity**

18. Which one(s) do you think is the reason that make(s) MANU unique?



We have owned the most league titles so far.

We had “Busby Babes” ever.

We experienced the Munich Air Crash and had revived.

We are inheriting the “Legend of No.7” tradition.

We have been under the leadership by Sir Ferguson for 25 years since 1986.

### **Brand Value**

19. At present, MANU has exceeded Coca-Cola and has become the 6<sup>th</sup> biggest brand in the world; which role do you think affects the brand value of MANU most?

Org boss: Glazers Family

Team manager: Sir Ferguson

Players

Fans

Others

20. How do you evaluate Glazers Family (MANU’s Ownership) work during last 6 years?

Terrible   Bad   Satisfied   Good   Excellent

### **MANU BRAND STRATEGIES BASED ON BRANDING DECISIONS**

#### **Branding Decision**

21. As a global fan-oriented football brand, in which way(s) do you think MANU need to focus?

Strengthen MANU culture: we believe!

Hold MANU Asian Tour, American Tour, or African Tour more frequently.

Enrich MANU merchandises.

Publish MANU magazine in multi-languages.

Extend MANU catering services in the world.

### **Brand-sponsor Decision**

22. Will you buy a t-shirt only with MANU logo or combine with NIKE?

Only with MANU team logo

Both MANU and NIKE logo

No preference

23. Have you been, or will you be a customer of NIKE, AON, DHL, and HUBLOT just because they are MANU's sponsors?

Yes    No    No comments

### **Brand-name Decision**

24. What do you think "Manchester United" – the club's name as the brand name?

It is perfect; I can directly recognize what it is.

It is not innovative, the brand name should be "Red Devil", or others...

No comment.

### **Brand-strategy Decision**

25. Will you buy MANU a certain type of products, if they are suitable for your parents, husband and wife, or children? (line-extension)

Yes, I can find one product with different ages and genders.

No, because there are few products that my family can use.

No preference.

26. So far, MANU's merchandises has involved in costume range, homeware range, and equipment range, what other ranges do you wish to concern? (brand-extension)

Fashion range (fashion factors involved in sport products)

Business range (products for businessmen who love MANU)

Art range (artwork designs integrated MANU awareness)

27. Do you think whether MANU need to establish multibrands? (multibrands)

Need. Multiple brands will fulfill multiple target market and satisfy segmented customers.

Do not need. Multiple brands soften and weaken the core MANU brand image in fans mind.

No comment

28. Do you think whether MANU need to establish new brands? (new brands)

Need. New brand highlight new features of MANU products.

Do not need. If the new brand didn't reveal MANU spirit, it will fail.

No comment.

29. Base on MANU and ZONG telecommunication's cobrands "MANU & ZONG" example, what other type(s) of brands do you think MANU can cooperate with? (cobrands)

Cooperate with brands in catering industry, eg. "MANU & McD"

Cooperate with brands in technology industry, eg. "MANU & DELL"

Cooperate with brands in entertainment industry, eg. “MANU & DISNEY”

Others

**Brand-repositioning Decision**

30. Will you introduce MANU brand to your friends and relatives, who are not the fans?

Yes No

## APPENDIX 2: Structured Questionnaire in Chinese

### 附录二：针对曼联球迷的调查问卷

各位亲爱的曼联球迷们，这是一份关于曼联的品牌战略实施的学士论文问卷。本人诚意邀请各位红魔们参与这份研究项目。通过您的参与，本人希望探究到曼联如何提高其品牌化策略。此问卷由四个部分组成：您的基本信息；曼联品牌意义的六个层次；曼联品牌的品牌资产、品牌价值和品牌识别；以及基于品牌化决策的曼联品牌战略。此问卷大约将花费您 10 分钟去完成。谢谢您的参与！

#### 您的基本信息

1. 您的性别是

男                      女

2. 您的年龄属于以下哪个范围

11-15 岁   16-20 岁   21-25 岁   26-30 岁   30 岁以上

3. 您来自哪个州

亚洲   欧洲   美洲   非洲   大洋洲

4. 您的职业是

学生   上班族   其他

5. 您作为曼联的球迷多少年了？

0-5 年   6-10 年   11-15 年   15-20 年   21 年或更长

6. 您多长时间观看一次曼联的比赛？

一个赛季一次   一个月一次   一周一次   只要有每场都看

7. 您最钟意曼联参与的哪项赛事？

英超联赛 欧冠联赛 英足总杯赛 英联赛杯赛 其他

**曼联品牌意义的六个层次**

8. 在多大程度上曼联体现了其品牌属性？（程度 1-5）

1 2 3 4 5

9. 在多大程度上曼联体现了其品牌效益？（程度 1-5）

1 2 3 4 5

10. 在多大程度上曼联体现了其品牌价值？（程度 1-5）

1 2 3 4 5

11. 在多大程度上曼联体现了其品牌文化？（程度 1-5）

1 2 3 4 5

12. 在多大程度上曼联体现了其品牌个性？（程度 1-5）

1 2 3 4 5

13. 在多大程度上曼联体现了其品牌用户？（程度 1-5）

1 2 3 4 5

**曼联品牌的品牌资产、品牌价值和品牌识别**

**品牌资产**

14. 在您心中“曼联”意味着什么？

英格兰足球

冠军与荣耀

胜利的象征

有着钢铁意志的勇士

15. 当您购买到曼联主题商品（例如球衣，运动衫，装备，纪念品等）时，您怎样评价其质量？（正版商品范畴）

糟糕 很差 一般 很好 上佳

16. 您印象最深刻的关于曼联的元素是什么？

曼联队徽及红色战袍

昵称 – “红魔”

老特拉福德 – “梦剧场”

主要赞助商 – 耐克 (NIKE) 和 怡安保险 (AON)

17. 您认为您对曼联品牌的忠诚度有多大？（程度 1-5）

1 2 3 4 5

## 品牌识别

18. 以下哪一个（或多个）原因使“曼联”变得独一无二？

我们赢得过最多的联赛冠军。

我们曾经拥有“巴斯比宝贝”。

我们经历过慕尼黑空难并且已经重生。

我们一直继承球队“7号传奇”的传统。

从 1986 年开始，我们在弗格森爵士的带领下已经奋斗了 25 年。

## 品牌价值

19. 目前，“曼联”已经超越“可口可乐”成为世界第六大品牌；您认为谁对其品牌价值的影响最大？

集团老板：格雷泽家族

球队教练：弗格森爵士

曼联球员

曼联球迷

其他

20. 您怎么评价格雷泽家族（曼联集团拥有者）在过去几年的工作业绩？

糟糕    很差    一般    很好    优秀

## 基于品牌化决策的曼联品牌战略

### 品牌化决策（Branding Decision）

21. 作为一个以球迷为导向的全球化足球品牌，您认为在哪个（或多个）方面曼联需要加强？

强化曼联文化：我们相信我们可以做到！（We believe we can!）

更为频繁地举办曼联亚洲行，美洲行，或非洲行等商业活动。

丰富曼联主题商品的种类。

出版多国语言的曼联主题杂志。

扩大曼联主题餐厅服务范围。



### 品牌归属决策 (Brand-sponsor Decision)

22. 您会购买只印有“曼联” logo 的 T 恤还是同时印有“曼联和耐克”两种 logo 的 T 恤?

只印有曼联 logo 的

同时印有曼联和耐克两种 logo 的

没有倾向

23. 您因为耐克 (NIKE)、怡安 (AON)、敦豪快递 (DHL) 和恒宝表 (HUBLOT) 是曼联的赞助商而成为过或将成为他们的顾客吗?

会

不会

不知道

### 品牌名称决策 (Brand-name Decision)

24. 您怎么看待“曼联” - 用球队的名称命名品牌?

很完美，我一眼就可以识别这个品牌是关于什么的。

不够创新，品牌名称应该为“红魔”或者其他。

不知道。

### 品牌策略决策 (Brand-strategy Decision)

25. 如果曼联的某种主题用品适合您，您父母，您妻子丈夫或者小孩的需要；您愿意购买吗？（产品线扩展）

愿意，因为我可以找到诸如此类的适合不同年龄和性别的商品。

不愿意，因为根本没有多少商品适合我的家人使用。

没有倾向。

26. 目前，曼联的主题商品已经涵盖了服饰范畴，家具范畴，装备器材范畴等等。除此之外还有哪些其他的商品范畴是您有意去关注的？（品牌扩展）

时尚范畴（时尚元素运用到体育产品中）

商务范畴（为钟爱曼联的商务人士量身打造）

艺术范畴（艺术设计的元素融合曼联概念）

27. 您认为“曼联”有必要建立多品牌吗？（多品牌建立）

有必要。多品牌可以符合多重目标市场以及可以满足不同的细分顾客。

没有必要。多品牌弱化了曼联品牌在球迷心中的核心品牌形象。

不知道。

28. 您认为“曼联”有必要建立新品牌吗？（新品牌建立）

有必要，新品牌能突出和强调曼联产品的新特征。

没有必要，如果新品牌没能体现曼联精神，此品牌将会流产。

不知道。

29. 鉴于曼联与中移动（ZONG CMPak）的合作品牌“MANU & ZONG”的案例，您认为曼联可以与其他哪些类型的品牌建立合作品牌？（合作品牌建立）

与餐饮业品牌建立合作品牌。比如：“MANU & McD”

与科技业品牌建立合作品牌。比如：“MANU & DELL”

与娱乐业品牌建立合作品牌。比如：“MANU & DISNEY”

或其他。

### 品牌再定位决策 (Brand-repositioning Decision)

30. 您会介绍“曼联”这个品牌给你的家人，朋友，亲戚或其他不属于曼联球迷范围的人吗？

会

不会